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Relationships

We've been talking for the past 2 weeks about shadow vs. substance. All of the things in the old creation, the old covenant, the old man that are shadows of true spiritual reality, true spiritual life, true spiritual fulfillment, but, in fact, are only shadows of it.

Now, if you don't know what I mean by shadow verses substance, you'll have to go back and grab some CDs out of our bookstore.

All of the good of the old covenant relationship with God was only a shadow of the reality in Christ. You have to understand that. But see that's true of the entire created realm. All of the good of the natural, created realm is only a shadow of the true that is found in Christ. And your soul was made for the true. Your soul was created, designed, fearfully and wonderfully made, for the substance of spiritual life. It was not made to find life in shadows.

Now its not that the shadows are not real. They're real according to the realm in which they exist. They're real in the earth. Its just that to think they offer your soul what it was created for is an illusion. To think that there is anything of spirit or life or fullness there is an illusion.

Now the world is orchestrated in such a way, and I suppose its our doing largely, that it tries to offer life to us in thousands of different illusions. And the best that a person of this world can do is select a few of those illusions that offer some partial good to the human soul and call that a good life. You know, we select the ones that make us the happiest, according to whatever we want most, and make that the purpose of life.

Even though we are constantly bumping up with the reality (that we incessantly attempt to ignore) that even the best of this earth seems conspicuously unfulfilling, temporary at best, skin deep, impossible to hold on to, constantly in a state of flux, difficult to control, etc. Now there are generally enough bursts of goodness, (although, again, skin deep, temporary, and unfulfilling) mingled with the hustle and bustle of life, that we can live most of our lives distracted from this gnawing reality. The gnawing reality of lifelessness. So we are distracted, but not satisfied. Amused but not fulfilled. Its better than nothing, but its certainly can't be life. But who has time to talk about it? Lets catch another movie!

Now any person that stops the game long enough to really look at this has to admit that there is so much illusion. And you don't have to be Christian to stop and realize this. Many, many people over the centuries have committed suicide rather than stare too long into the face of this. When they figure this out, many people have taken their lives when they come face to face with the reality of shadowland – but see... they never found the reality in the face of Christ. They never looked beyond the shadow.

Many of you know I was a philosophy major in college. I used to read about the thoughts of the smart guys. Its amazing, looking back, how hard these people with towering intellects struggled to find something meaningful, something perfect, something eternal to live for, to write about, to give purpose. Its interesting to me as I think about it...to some of these intellectual giants, they boiled it all down to erotic love. To some it was the nature of beauty and symmetry. To others it was the power of logic and reason and thought. Well, whatever it was...it was a only a shadow.

In fact, even in the Bible, the writer or Ecclesiastes does a nice job detailing the futility and vanity of life in the earth. You can check that out for yourselves. Most people, including me, haven't enjoyed that book because, frankly, I didn't understand why the author kept telling me that everything under the sun was vanity. I didn't want to face it. And I didn't know, at that time, the alternative to living in "under the sun", i.e. the reality of living in Christ.

I'm not trying to be heavy and depressing this morning. I am just, again, trying to get us to put our foot on the brakes long enough to ask the question – Lord am I seeking the substance among the shadow? Am I in love with an illusion?

The fact of the matter is that everything your soul was created to look for, to long for, to need, is found perfectly, fully, and permanently in Christ. And therefore the knowing of Him, your life, is the experience of everything your soul has ever wanted. That's the truth.

But it has to be a knowing of Him according to the relationship that exists. I hear myself say that and I know that is hard to hear. But nonetheless it is true, and I'm not sure I can say it better. It has to be a knowing of Him as He is. How is he? He's your life. You don't know him any other way than as your life. You don't know him in a way that is not according to the relationship He has with you. What is that relationship? He's your life. He's in you. You're in Him. He's been made all things unto you.

That might sound strange, but let me try to explain by saying this: I can't get to know my wife as a son. I can't develop a father – son relationship with my wife. No matter how hard I try, that is simply not the relationship that I have with her. To whatever extent I get to know my wife as my son, it is a false-knowing. It isn't according to the nature of my relationship. It doesn't even make sense to know her apart from the relationship we're in. It doesn't make sense to get to know her better as a son, because that's simply not the nature of the relationship that I have.

I can't get to know my daughter as my grandfather. I have to get to know her according to the relationship that we have. Does that make sense? I can imagine that Eden is my grandfather. I can call her "gramps", and ask he to teach me how to go fishing, and beg her to tell me stories about World War II. And all of that is fine and nice, but it corresponds to nothing in reality. It doesn't correspond to the actual relationship.

Well, the relationship you have with Christ is union. Sharing of His life. Being in Him. Him being formed in your soul. **And you are an expression, in one way or another, of the extent to which you have seen that relationship.** Let me repeat that. Your life is an expression, in one way or another, of the extent to which you have seen that relationship. And that is because, to the extent that you

have seen that relationship, to that extent your soul has found all things that it has ever longed for. All of it is found in your relationship with Christ.

But relationship is one of those words that I don't like to use very often because it means different things to everybody. I often try to steer clear of words that I know mean something different to every hearer. Everyone that is a Christian says they have their own relationship with Christ. But Christ only has one **kind** of relationship with everybody. I don't mean he doesn't know you as an individual, I mean he only has **kind** of relationship with you. For example: All of you are my friends. None of you is my father. I only have one **kind** of relationship with you. And if we are not knowing the nature, the reality of that relationship, the relationship as it exists in Christ, then we have an imaginary relationship.

The fact is, that many Christians imagine their relationship to Christ to be like something they are familiar with in the natural arena of man's soul. You know, like buddy, or lover, or Dad. And its not that he is not, in a way, those things. Its just that our earthly experience, or imagination of those things are far from reality. They are, again, a shadow at best.

But your view of the reality of union with Christ, your true relationship with Christ – I'm in the Father, you're in Me, and I'm in you. Your view of that relationship, that reality, that salvation is the extent to which you have stepped out of the skin deep, the temporary, and the unfulfilling, and into fullness of life. The abundance of Life.

And, as I said, you are an expression of that view of Christ that is currently working in you. I heard JW Luman say that this week, and it just struck me as so true. In a minute I'm going to read to you the context of where he says that.

In other words, your soul, your emotions, your desires, your thoughts, are always manifesting the extent to which they have come to find all things in Him, or, to the contrary, the extent to which they still seek all things outside of Him.

In other words, your view of Christ determines whether you have found joy in Him or are seeking it elsewhere. Your view of Christ, your knowing the Lord, determines whether you have found eternal purpose in Him, or whether you seek it elsewhere.

Again, you are the expression of whatever view of Christ is currently working in you. Whatever is currently reality in you. The extent to which you know the Lord. And you are becoming a manifestation of that view, of that true knowledge of Him, wherever you go.

And that is exactly what 2 Corinthians 2:14 says. Let me read it to you.

14 Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us manifests the fragrance of the knowledge of Him in every place.

What a statement! Through us there is a continual manifestation, everywhere we go, of a soul that has come to know Him. Everywhere we go, bearing that image, giving off that fragrance. The fragrance of His life.

Its like the old scrolls that were sealed with wax and a signet ring. The ring pressed down into the wax, and the pattern on the ring conforms the wax to its own image. The pattern turns the wax into a replica, a likeness. And that wax seal carries that

very pattern wherever that scroll goes. Wherever it is sent. The difference with us is that the signet ring of Jesus Christ is not pressing in on us from without, but it is bearing upon our soul from within. His Spirit bearing in upon our soul from the inside out as Christ, our life, is revealed.

And one of the main places that the fragrance of His knowledge is manifest is in the arena of relationships.

Here is a perfect example of where we look for the perfect in the shadow, we demand the perfect in the shadow, we expect the perfect in the shadow, rather than finding it in Christ and manifesting it in the shadow.

This week my wife cut and pasted a portion of a Luman teaching into an email. It was so good, I thought I'd just read it to you since I can't say it better than this.

“Here's where the rubber hits the road...it's in relationship. Look at it in a natural marriage, which is to be and does become in its most perfect sense, an expression of Christ and the church in the earth. Now, no natural marriage is ever going to come to perfection as a marriage, because it is natural and because physical death is going to end it one day. But it can become an expression of something that is perfect, and that's the relationship between Christ and the church.

I make this statement because I find some people looking for, and I've dealt with some recently within our fellowship, who are trying to find perfection within a natural marriage. Well, hon, that's like trying to find perfection in each other. You're not going to find it there. You find it in Him and you express it to one another, and to the degree that you find it in Him, to that degree you express it to one another, but only to that degree. When you stop finding it in Him, you try to find it in one another, and that is one of the flesh traps. We set ourselves up for bitter disappointment, and not only disappointment, but for bitter divisions. Not “I thought he was this and I thought he was that”...but now I start out thinking everybody's nothing and I'm never disappointed.

I've come to realize that everyone is an expression of that view of Christ working in them, and my concern is that there's some view working in you, and in me, and in His body. And then I try to feed that view. But don't get all caught up in trying to find perfection in something other than Him and then manifesting it to each other.

If you see something lacking in me, then add it to me. Manifest it to me. Not so that I'll return it to you...you manifest it to me, so that you'll make up for the lack that is in me until I see Christ in that measure. We don't think that way, but that's the way it has to be. There's no point in pointing out my shortcomings...what good is that going to do? The law does that. We can actually fill it up in one another by just stepping in there, just stepping into the gap and manifest Christ. Add to that brother, this sister. And you know, that should start with a husband and wife. It should start right there. Just fill up the gap. We all fall down on this, but I'm telling you the right way to do it – fill up the gap. Fill up the gap. This is what Christ did. **He became the full expectation of God concerning you and I.**”

(now before I comment on that, I just wanted to quickly say that this is not to say that someone should stay in the house with an abusive or adulterous spouse, or whatever. He's not giving advice on specific marital situations where there is not even a shadow present of Christ and the church. He is just laying down a really good principle for relationships in Christ. I say that for some specific people that need to hear it)

Can you see what he's saying? It was wonderfully said. He's saying that a natural marriage is and can really be a shadow, an expression, of Christ's union to the church. Christ's joining to His body. But no natural marriage can ever be the actual perfection itself. No natural marriage can ever give to a soul the actual union of life that it longs for. Not the real thing. A natural marriage can give you a natural taste of that spiritual union – and in so doing it is good and enjoyable. And that's fine. But that is not the fulfillment. That is not the reality. The reality is your spiritual union with Christ.

And yet our **expectation** is to find the reality in the shadow. Our expectation is to find perfection in the shadow...and you'll never find it there. Its not just marriage either. Its everything that is good because it speaks of Christ, but is not the good of Christ Himself.

We have expectations of perfection, of fulfillment outside of Christ. We have them in relationships. We have them in circumstances. We have them in jobs, and families, and dwellings...as though any of those things, even when perfectly controlled and arranged according to the best arrangement, controlled just the way you like it, will ever grant you what you're looking for. As though you're actually going to be able to bite down into a shadow of a turkey and get a good meal.

And frankly, that is why control is perhaps the most coveted power of the human soul. The ability to control is the greatest human value. And to be "out of control" is one of the greatest sources of fear. A person who has not found fulness in Christ, perfection in Christ, will always be attempting to control every circumstance, every relationship. Some are good at control, others aren't, but everyone would do it if they could.

But again, like I said, even if you can control and manipulate with skill and success, you still wont find what you're looking for, because you're looking in the wrong place. I've heard the saying: Even if you win that rat race, you're still a rat. And we know that people who successfully control are no happier or more fulfilled than anybody expecting things outside of Christ.

You're never going to find it there. You find it in Him and you express it to people and to situations. You express it, but only to the degree that you find it in Him.

And JW is right – when you don't find it in him, you seek to find it in each other. And that is the root cause of nearly all of our disappointment, anger, bitterness, division, jealousy, and rejection.

And I'm guilty of this (which, incidentally, is why my wife copied that paragraph to me). But where does the disappointment come from. Where does the anger come from? Where does the rejection come from? Well, it comes from first not seeing fulness in Him. Then, not finding it where it will never be – in each other. And then we begin to point out to one another each person's lack.

And then, inevitably, we begin to deal with one another based on shortcomings. We begin to relate based on dashed expectations. And, frankly, your shortcoming is making me mad. And this one hurts my feelings. And that dashed expectation is another reason why I feel rejected. And that unmet need is why I'm so flaming jealous. And when you didn't do that again, that's why I'm so ticked off! Don't you know you were supposed to do that to make me feel good about myself!

And that becomes the nature of so many of our relationships. We're not trying to make our relationship like that. We're not trying to feel that way about our spouse, about our sister, about our mom or our kids. Its just a product of what we're looking for in them. It naturally happens, it cannot not happen, if you're looking for something in them that you haven't found in Christ.

And we carry that expectation day after day, month after month, year after year. And expectation outside of Christ will slowly, or quickly, tear relationships apart. Or they will turn relationships into control. Constant vying for control. Or bitterness. Bitterness that grows as the years go by. Bitterness that seems to have a life of its own after a while. Or distance. A slow growing apart. A slow but sure disappointment with another person that, though they live in my house, keeps them away from my heart because, God knows, they never give me what I need.

And I'm telling you that expectations for reality, for fullness, for life, for that which your soul longs for...any expectations of this kind that are aimed anywhere other than the knowing of Him, will disappoint. Will damage. Will divide.

And I realize that this is hard. But why is this hard? Only because we have so long sought the perfect where it cannot be found. We have sought life where there is only a shadow of life. We have sought to find in others what is only in Him. We have looked among the shadows for the substance. We've looked for the living among the dead. And brothers and sisters it is only in Christ.