

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the firstborn of all creation, Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord, amen.

Neither PJ nor I like to dust. PJ actually has a pretty good excuse. She's allergic to dust and dust mites, at least that's what she claims the doctor told her... I, on the other hand, have no such excuses, I just don't have the time or the inclination. So, we pay someone to come to our house and do the dusting. She does other cleaning as well, but I really appreciate that she gets rid of the dust.

Yesterday marked the 50th Anniversary of Neal Armstrong setting foot on the moon. What a great feat of American ingenuity, courage, and skill. An estimated 1 million people watched the launch from the roads and surrounding area near Cape Canaveral while another 550 million watched from their TV sets. On July 20th 1969 I sat on our couch totally amazed at what I was watching and even my 11 year old self knew it was an historic event. One of the tidbits I discovered as I was reading about the Apollo 11 mission was that nobody knew how deep the dust was on the moon. There was a collective sigh of relief when the Lunar Module, The Eagle, landed and didn't sink in the dust. There was another sigh when Neal Armstrong took his one small step for a man and that giant leap for mankind and likewise did not sink. He and his fellow astronaut Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin spent about 2 hours and 15 minutes outside the Lunar Module doing experiments and collecting moon rocks and dust. Armstrong and Aldrin spent 21

hours 31 minutes on the lunar surface at a site they named Tranquility Base before lifting off to rejoin Columbia in lunar orbit. While they were on the moon they were the first humans to see the earth rise from the lunar horizon. The earthrise had been seen by other astronauts on previous Apollo missions, but they were the first to glimpse it while actually standing on the moon. Here's a high def picture of what they saw. (SLIDE)

Every astronaut who has witnessed the earthrise has commented on its beauty and the complete change in perspective they had on our home planet and on life in general after seeing the earth appear over the moon's horizon. One astronaut commented that everything in space is black and white. From the surface of the moon to the far-flung stars, that's all there is, black and or white. That's all there is, until the big beautiful blue earth makes her appearance! Jim Lovell, from the earlier Apollo 8 mission, which only orbited the moon said, "Up there, it's a black-and-white world. There's no color. In the whole universe, wherever we looked, the only bit of color was back on Earth... It was the most beautiful thing there was to see in all the heavens. People down here don't realize what they have."

The incarnation of Jesus Christ likewise provided humanity with a totally new and different perspective. Colossians 1:15-28 presents the world of its day with a massively changed theological perspective. Jesus Christ "is the image of

the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers — all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” To us Christians, those words are familiar. They express what the church has always believed about Jesus Christ. You can’t overstate the impact those words had on people at the time when they were written and first read. To the pagan world, they upended everything. Talk about a giant leap for mankind... the almighty God who was responsible for all of creation choosing to and being pleased to dwell in an earthly body made of stinking and slowly decaying flesh. Add to that the idea that He did it all knowing He would be crucified, die, and be buried, but then rise after 3 days. He did all that to reunite you to himself. He did all that, so you could live forgiven, so you could live holy, so you could live blamelessly. In Jesus, God made peace with a broken and sinful universe. God literally changed our perspective from sinner to saint.

Now, can you imagine being in the same house as this Man in whom God saw fit to make his dwelling? I mean in our Gospel story Jesus is at the home of Martha and Mary. There is no mention of who else might have been there at the time, but since Martha was so preoccupied with so many tasks, I think it’s safe to assume there were others present. Mary and the other guests were all sitting at

Jesus' feet listening to him teach and preach. In this story we're presented with two perspectives; one of serving and one of learning and worshiping. When Martha complains, Jesus sets her straight on which perspective was more important at that particular moment. Jesus wasn't condemning good works of service for others, He was making the point that there is a time for serving and a time for worshiping. When Jesus is present it's pretty obvious where Jesus says our priority needs to be.

Well, it might have been obvious back then, when Jesus was alive and walking around, but what about today? It's easy for us to chastise Martha for not recognizing the importance of being with Jesus while he was alive, but before we jump too quickly to condemn Martha's actions, let's see how we fair today. How many times do we choose to stay busy doing many things when Jesus is present and calling us to worship. I mean Jesus is with us all the time and in all things, but he's most clearly present when we gather together around his word and when we celebrate the sacrament of his body and blood. Pastors are notorious for getting preoccupied by way too many things. Everything from hymn selections to trying to achieve error free bulletins, from trying to get all the announcements correct to editing the prayers so they reflect who we are and the things we need and want to bring to God's attention. We get so wrapped up in trying to make the worship experience meaningful and inspirational that we forget we need to be worshipful

ourselves. I've heard from some people that they get distracted even while sitting in the pew and listening to God's Word. Have you ever found yourself going over you to do list or making out your shopping list when the Lord's word is being spoken or sung? I know I have!

Thankfully, the dust that builds up on the shelves and knickknacks around my house and all that dust on the moons surface, aren't enough to kill anyone, although our many distractions could stop us from truly listening to and worshiping our God. If we're so distracted that we miss out on the words of eternal life and we get stuck in our old sinful ways, how sad we become. Our distractions are like the dust that builds up on everything and can keep us from experiencing the joy of God's saving grace. Our distractions, which by the way you can call sin, separate us from God and make us strangers to God. Jesus overcame our sin and through his blood on the cross blew off the dust of our sin and made us righteous. It's not our worthiness, but the righteousness of Christ that dusts us off and makes us presentable to God. Because of what Jesus did for you, you are now like the big, beautiful, blue earth in a sea of dusty blackness. In Christ Jesus you are God's priceless gem and for you God was willing to, no God was pleased to become one of us and die for you.

May we always see life through the perspective of Jesus and the cross. May we live our lives joyful and free because God has washed all of our dust off in our

Baptism and made us His own. May your distractions be few and your priorities be always set on Jesus, which is the better part and will never be taken away from you. Amen.