Hi,

Today’s updates:

* My 11am Sunday class will be week 4 of the series, *The New Testament in Seven Sentences*. We will be talking about grace. The class will meet on [my personal Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/scottengle).
* My 3pm Monday class on Matthew and my noon Tuesday class on Genesis will meet next week, both on my Facebook page.
* The links to my on-line classes, the video recordings of the classes, the class audio podcasts, and the archive of these daily emails can all be found at [www.scottengle.org](http://scottengle.org/scotts-weekly-classes/). All the postings are up-to-date.
* I’ve been told that my YouTube page/channel can be hard to find. A simple solution would be to [go to the link (here)](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChtwqaUcpZbwyTWnkp6INwQ?view_as=subscriber) and then bookmark the page or subscribe to my channel.
* The Weekly Bible Study for this weekend is attached.

**Colossians 3:1-2 (NRSV)**

**So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, . . .**

**Matthew 6:33 (NRSV)**

**33But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.**

**Philippians 1:27 (NRSV)**

**27Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, . . .**

One image from yesterday’s email has stuck with me. It’s Curly, aka Jack Palance in *City Slickers*, perched high on his horse holding up one finger as he tells Billy Crystal that the secret to life is “one thing.” Thus, I chuckled aloud when I opened Morna Hooker’s commentary on Philippians. Here is her opening sentence on the section of Paul’s letter to the Philippians that begins at 1:27:

“The opening word, (*monon*, “only,” as in the NRSV) indicates the move to exhortation: “There is just one thing!”

Like minds perhaps. The cowboy Curly and the apostle Paul? At least they both know the importance of having “one thing.” I don’t really know what’s on Curly’s mind, but Paul tells us exactly what he has in mind.

Paul urges the Philippian Christians to recognize that the “one thing” is to “live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.” The NIV translators put it this way: “Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.” N.T. Wright renders it this way: “The one thing I would stress is this: our public behavior must match up to the gospel of the king.” Here’s Eugene Peterson’s paraphrase: “Meanwhile, live in such a way that you are a credit to the Message of Christ.”

*The life I’ve always wanted?*

But what is the shape of a life worthy of the gospel of Christ? We’ve been using John Ortberg’s book, *The Life You’ve Always Wanted*, to learn about practices that can help us “gain power to live life as Jesus taught and modeled it.” But what does that sort of life really look like? Is it really the life I’ve always wanted? Do I really want to live as Jesus taught and modeled? Perhaps my desires need some work too.

In his letter to the Christians in Philippi, Paul devotes himself to laying out the shape of this life. Early in the letter, Paul emphasizes unity among the Christians, a recurring theme across his letters, giving believers some general instruction:

If you’ve gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you *care*— then do me a favor: Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends. Don’t push your way to the front; don’t sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don’t be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand. (from Peterson’s paraphrase *The Message*)

Does Paul describe here the life I’ve always wanted? I don’t know that I’ve always wanted it, but as I’ve gotten older, wiser, and closer to God, such a life is the life I want now. A life filled with loving, deep-spirited friends and helping hands? Of course I want such a life. And to find it, I must look upward.

*Looking up*

In today’s Scripture passage from Colossians, Paul reminds us that because we have been raised with Christ, we are to look upward. We are to focus our minds and energies on the things of God, not allowing ourselves to be dragged down by the priorities and demands that the world seeks to thrust upon us.

Consider this. What commands the bulk of your attention? Does it lift you up? Does it strengthen you? Challenge you? Humble you? Make you more Christlike? Are your eyes truly cast upward? Here is more of Paul’s advice to the Philippians:

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you. (Philippians 4:8-9, NRSV)

In his commentary on Philippians, Gerald Hawthorne writes, “Paul’s wish is that the Philippians might enjoy productive, worry-free lives with their thoughts and feelings guarded by the peace of God. He told them that they might attain this goal with the aid of prayer and thanksgiving. But that is not all that is required. In v. 8 and 9 he adds still other important steps. He says that fear, worry, anxiety, depression—all the countless concerns that bombard the Philippian Christians’ minds—can be kept at bay, if they will continuously reckon up, think over, estimate aright, fill their minds with all things good and true, and then rise up and put into practice the demands of the Christian gospel. ‘Then indeed,’ Paul says, ‘the God of peace will be with you.’”Yes, this is the life I’ve always wanted, and I’m pretty sure the same is true for you.

*A bit more -- a public gospel?*

The word “gospel” translates the Greek, *evangelion*. It is sometimes translated “good news” or “glad tidings.”

In the Greco-Roman world of Jesus’ day, *evangelion* was not a church word, nor it did it have particularly religious connotations. It was simply a word of public proclamation for a big joyous event, such as the birth of the emperor’s heir, the enthroning of a new emperor, or a great military victory. This proclamation of good news, this *evangelion*, would be carried out to the provinces by messengers and heralds. The messengers of Caesar carried the gospel of Caesar throughout the empire.

Paul, of course, speaks of the gospel of Christ. This proclamation is the good news from God (not Caesar) that salvation has come, that Jesus (not Caesar) is Lord. It is a proclamation brought to shepherds on a hillside by God’s herald angels (*ángelos* is the Greek word for a “messenger” from the gods).

Christians are those who believe that Jesus is Lord *already,* even as we await the final consummation of his kingdom. Jesus is Lord of all creation and all persons now. Jesus’ Lordship is not something we are waiting for. Sure . . . there are people who have not heard of Jesus and countless more who refuse to acknowledge Jesus at all. But their refusal doesn’t diminish our claim that the “gospel of Christ” is true. It is a bit like an American who says, “Donald Trump is not my President.” The truth is that Trump is the president, whether everyone acknowledges it or not, whether they like it or not.

God’s proclamation, this *evangelion* of Christ, is public. It is for the whole world. Even for those who refuse to hear, whose hearts blind them to the truth. Paul’s point in 1:27 is that we are to live lives that are worthy of this proclamation. It is a public proclamation that we are to live out in public lives. How else could we ever be the light to the world? (See Matthew 5:14-16)

‘til Monday, grace and peace,

Scott