

Colossians 1:15-23

The Centrality of Christ

Image Church // Living Beyond Sunday: Week 2

Intro

Alright, if you have your bibles grab them and turn to the book of **Colossians**... We're in week 2 in our series called **Living beyond Sunday** where we're walking through the book of Colossians...

BTW: I wanted to let you know about something new and exciting that we hope will be a helpful resource for you!

- We've launched a Podcast called **Living Beyond Sunday** where we're going to be pressing even more practically into what Christianity looks like in everyday life... We've already dropped Episode 1... **There's a QR code** on the screen or you can search it on Apple podcast or Spotify!

Here's what we go in the book of Colossians is a church that's been doing really well, but they've been experiencing some pressure by the surrounding community to turn away from the centrality of Jesus...

- **To see Jesus as a thing, not THE thing that their lives are centered around...**

This is what we're up against, the world around us is constantly putting pressure on us to drift away from the centrality of Jesus...

- Your job...
- Money...
- More stuff = more comfort and the good life...
- Family dynamic...
- Status... Popularity...

Well, Paul's letter is timeless...

Last week we saw Paul starts off by affirming the church, and then he writes out a prayer that he's been praying for them- where he asks that God would fill them with a **deep abiding understanding of Christ**... And then Paul concludes this first section with a declaration of God's saving work through Jesus...

And then what we're going to see this morning, is that Paul's going to now highlight the nature of Christ, holding up His **supremacy and centrality**...

And he does this to help foster the very thing he's prayed for them... His goal is to help them grow in their understanding of Christ, validating who He is so that they would see why He should be at the center of their lives...

That Jesus is not just **a thing, but He is THE thing they need to center their lives around**...

This is my hope for you this morning... **I want you to take inventory of your life** as we walk through the realities of who Jesus is and I want you to come face to face with the question:

Is Jesus just part of your life or is He the one that your life is centered around??

- First jump many of you would say yes... Don't answer this too quickly... A lot of miss conceptions on what this looks like...

Let's dive in and look at who Jesus is and the implications it should have on our lives...

Colossians 1:15-23

¹⁵ He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

What Paul's saying here is that the way that God reveals himself, the way that He's able to be seen and perceived is through Jesus! You want to see God? Look at Jesus!

Hebrews 1:3 would say it like this: He [Jesus] is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature...

Jesus is the exact imprint of God. **IOW**: Everything God is, everything it means to be God, Jesus is!

- It's because Jesus is fully God, He can be the image bearer of God.
- *Like taking a dixie cup down to Savannah and try to put the ocean in there...*

Here's why this is so important: Every other religion has someone that speaks on behalf of God, or is a representative for God, **but none of them would dare claim to be God...**

And every other religions representative **has a similar message**: God is at the top of the mountain work your way to him...

*Christianity teaches something completely different, God didnt send some random person to come tell us how we can work our way to Him... **God himself came down and did the work for us so that we could be with Him!**

- Our sin problem, is a problem only God can fix not us... If we could fix it God's really not that great...
- Also shows the character of God: compassion/love/care!

Paul says something else about God here in **verse 15**: he says that He's the *firstborn of all creation*...

- This is not in the sense that *someone didn't exist, and then they are born and now they are brought into existence*.

When he says **firstborn** right here, he's talking about a **position, a ranking, that precedes everyone else**... He's pointing to the position of superiority that Jesus holds above everything...

Then Paul continues in **verse 16**: **For** by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

One of the most important things that you need to see here is the clear evidence that **Jesus is God**...

The text says **ALL things were created by JESUS**... That's something only God can do... God is the only uncreated being and it's from Him all things are created...

This also means that **Jesus was not a created being**, for that to happen He would have had to create Himself which is impossible...¹

This is so important because this is a key divide between Christianity and every other religion... Every other religion believes that Jesus was a created being... They even try to manipulate the bible to that end...

- They ask Questions like where does Jesus claim to be God or where is Jesus affirmed as God?

The reason so many people want to dismiss Jesus as a created being is because if they can put Him in that box then they can treat Him like a salad bar, taking what they want and leaving what they don't like...

- This is where some of you are...

But the thing is, if Jesus is God then it changes everything!

- It means His Word is the ultimate authority over your life!

There's something else here... Because Jesus **created everything**, and he is **over everything**, everything in creation exists to point you to Him!

Augustine: "All of the creation is God's smile toward us. "Good gifts." Gifts that draw us to him. Like a wedding ring. No bride should say, "The ring is enough! The ring should point you to the greatest gift; the man behind the ring!" Everything you enjoy in life, a beautiful sunset, a peaceful river, an incredible forest, the mountains, the beach, the ocean, beautiful flowers, animals- dogs (*cats evidence of the fall*)...

¹ Some thoughts in this section are adapted from JD Greear, *Fist Place In Everything*.

Sex, the joy of children, the companionship of friends... All of it was designed to point you to the one that designed it all! **JESUS!**

All Creation is a gift to remind you of the creator!

- **Example:** I love *Reese's Peanut butter eggs*... Mom still gives them to me every year... Best candy ever... How I eat it... How I savor it... I worship at God's gift of taste buds!!

Creation should compel your worship!

Jesus is the one standing behind creation! He's the one we need to see! *It's all by Him, it's all for Him, it's all about Him...*

And family listen don't miss this... **You are part of that creation...**

You were created by Jesus, and you were created for Jesus... Which means that apart from Jesus there's something missing... The fulfillment you want, the purpose you desire to find isn't there...

- **Example: Ecclesiastes 2...** Solomon had it all and pursued it all but in the end, he said that it was all *futile and a pursuit of the wind*.
- This is where some of you are... You're pursuing all of these things in hopes to find something that you will never find... The things of this world will leave you empty and wanting more...

When Jesus isn't at the center of your life, you're disconnected from what and who you were created for...

Example: Think about it like this... If you have an iPhone that's older than about a year... You know this the battery dies in about 5 minutes...

- The iPhone is no good without a charger... There is so much potential in that phone, but **it doesn't work without the charger**... It's nothing more than a lifeless brick with a dead battery, but when you plug it in... It is able to fulfill its purpose...

The same is true with you and me...

Paul goes even further here to say that: **He's the one who holds all things together...**

- He's the one who keeps our universe and our world intact...
- And He's the one who holds you together... He's the one who's over your life and your story...

I know at times that it can feel like your life is spiraling out of control... But the reality is that it's not... Jesus is the one holding it together even when you can't see it...

- *I'm with you... You're in my hand... This didn't catch me by surprise... This is not the end... LOOK AT ME... I love you... I gave my life for you... Nothing can snatch you from the palm of my hand...*
- *I know your pain, I entered into it... I'm here with you through yours...*

Some of you just need to hear that today...

Then Paul moves from creation into the new creation that Jesus came to establish...

verse 18 (leave the whole vers on the screen): *I really want to break this down, he says...*

¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church.

So Jesus is the head of the **BODY** - which is the church...

Why is called the **BODY**? *This is so important...*

- Because each Christ-follower makes up a different part of the body- some hands, some feet, some eyes, some ears... Each person making up each part with different God-given gifts...
- And together they make up one BODY - the body of CHRIST whose purpose is to display Jesus to the surrounding community and to the world...

BTW: This is why your presence matters when it comes to our church community...

- *Flesh out...* You miss out, we miss out, missional ability is impacted...

You ever seen a body part detached from the body?!? Yeah that's what a Christian detached from the church is like...

This also has to change the way that we view the church... This is Jesus' church, it was His idea and He's the head of it... So that means that the way that we interact and engage with the church matters...

How you engage with the church ultimately reveals your loyalty to Jesus and whether or not He's truly at the center of your life...

- What does your engagement, and your involvement show about your loyalty to Jesus and He's centrality in your life?
- Are you actually part of the mission or are you a bystander?

Example: When you play a sport...

- Part of a team... You're present at practices, you show up for the games...
- You submit to the coach... You don't run your own play or do your own thing... You don't not show up...
- If you did that it would show that you're not loyal to the team or the coach...
- You would be part of the team on paper but functionally you're not really part of the team because you're not synced up with the rest of the players under the leadership of the coach...

For many they claim to be a Christian but the way they interact with the team proves otherwise...

The church is not an option... Not a box that you check it is a body that you make up under the Lordship of Christ that's designed to display him to the world...

This should reset the way that we think about **church!**

Then Paul says: **He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, Firstborn from the dead...** Points to Jesus' resurrection and how it initiates the start of new life that's possible through His finished work...

And then Paul says... **that in everything he might be preeminent. Paul's goal for the church in Colossae is that Jesus fundamentally changes their lives...** That He would be over it and the center of it...

Example: Some of us think that Jesus being preeminent means that he is number 1 on our priority list.

- That we have our priority lists and it goes Jesus, family, church, 1, 2, 3 or whatever it might be for you. That is not at all what it means, what I am saying is that Jesus is the paper that your priority list is written on.²

Is this true for you?

Is Jesus a part of your life or is He the center of your life?

Does it impact:

How you treat/interact with others?

- Spouse, kids, coworker, neighbor, stranger?

Time:

- Commitments over the church? Serving, here and beyond here... Being with people...

Talent:

- Your vocation is: for God's glory, for God's Kingdom...
 - How can you leverage your gifts- out there & here...

Treasure:

- Giving says a lot about where Christ is in your heart...

Mission:

- Do you have this in everything you do?

² Matt Chandler, *Christ is the "More"*

Then watch this, Verse 19: Paul's going to bring it all full circle- He's about to preach the gospel again! This is the second time Pauls preached the gospel to this church and we're not even out of **chapter 1!**

And Keep in mind this is a church that's been doing well!!!

Verse 19: ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. ²¹ And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²² he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, ²³ if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister

It's because Jesus is over everything, and because He is holding all things together that He can *reconcile* all things that are broken back together!

- **Reconcile:** to restore something that is broken

Only the Creator, the one who's *over all things* could *restore all things!*

This is the **GOSPEL...**

*See, nothing could stop Jesus, nothing that could hinder Jesus, there was nothing that could persuade Jesus out of doing what He did, there was no sin to great, there was no rival too strong, not even death itself could hold Jesus back, because...

And it's in the resurrection, that Jesus completed everything necessary to save us from sin and death, proving that He's superior over **all things**...

He is the **beginning** and the **end**, He is the **Mighty One**, He is the **Advocate**, the **Chief Corner Stone**, the **Great High Priest**, the **Lion of Juda**, He is the **rock**, He is the **deliverer**, He is **Immanuel**, He's the **Mediator**, He's **The Word**, **The Way**, **The Vine**, **The Truth**, He is the **Wonderful Counselor**, **Mighty God**, **Prince of Peace**, He is the great **I AM**, He was and He is and He always will be!

Jesus is not just a piece or a part of the Christian life He is the essence of the Christian life...

- Some of you have drifted...
- Some of you are literally doing your own thing and sprinkle in some Jesus...
- Some of you have head knowledge, but no activity...
- Some of you have been pulled away by the pursuit of other things...
- Some of you have no missional intentionality...
- Some of you have lost sight in the midst of suffering...

The goal is not that this would be a theological construct but a physical reality!

- Some of these things you know to be true but there's a disconnect when it comes to how you live your life...

Wherever the gap is in your life, Jesus is not at the center/over...

Conclusion [VAMP]

Appeal to believers:

- Repent... This has not been true in your life...
- Reorient...

Appeal to non-believers:

- Jesus is the center of the universe whether or not you believe it... The question is will you surrender to Him?

Point to the card in the front of the seat... Baptism... Call people to come and pray down front... To get in a posture of surrender....