

Series: **Leadership Sermons 2024**  
Today's Title: **"The Reason for the Priority of Jesus"**  
January 7, 2024 – Colossians 1:15-18

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**Objective:** To help people know the deity of Jesus and to make Him the priority in life.

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### *Opening prayer*

At the start of a new year, I always enjoy looking back at the past year – to try and get a sense of the year's important events and memories that made that year unique.

To get a sense of the '2023 culture' – what better place to look than the top Google searches.

Nothing gives an insight into the culture than what were the most popular on-line searches.

Top 2023 Google searches – 2 categories

#### **Top 10 News Story Searches:**

- 1. War in Israel and Gaza**
- 2. Titanic submarine** – June - imploded killing all passengers.
- 3. Hurricane Hilary** – Aug. 20 – California hurricane / tropical storm
- 4. Hurricane Idalia** – Aug. 31 – hit gulf Florida golf coast then traversed across Florida.
- 5. Hurricane Lee** – Sept – hit New England
- 6. Maine shooting**
- 7. Nashville shooting**
- 8. Maui fire** – August – over 100 people died.
- 9. Idaho murder trial**

## 10. Canada wildfires – June – thick smoke in NYC

### Top 10 People Searches:

1. **Damar Hamlin** – Buffalo Bills football player – suffered a heart attack on the field on Jan. 2, 2023 – recovered – back in the lineup in October.
2. **Jeremy Renner** – actor – New Year’s Day accident while trying to stop his snow-removal tractor from sliding and hitting his adult nephew - 8 ribs broken in 14 places, an eye socket, a knee, along with a collapsed lung and his liver pierced from a rib bone -
3. **Travis Kelce** – KC Chiefs tight end – Taylor Swift
4. **Tucker Carlson** – Conservative commentator
5. **Lil Tay** – social media influencer
6. **Andrew Tate** – social media influencer
7. **Carlee Russell** – faked her own kidnapping.
8. **Jamie Foxx** – actor / entertainer – serious health scare - hospitalization
9. **Danny Masterson** – actor – ‘That 70’s show’ – sentenced 30 yrs. for rape.
10. **Matt Rife** - comedian

It’s always amazing how much happens in a year – and how quickly we forget what has happened.

It all fades into the background so quickly!

We live in a culture – where staying focused – staying on task – is difficult – because so many different things appear before us.

Attention spans have been shrinking for many decades now. One study states that in the early 2000s, attention spans were approximately 2.5 minutes, on average. Recently the average has gone down to about 47 seconds.

(<https://time.com/6302294/why-you-cant-focus-anymore-and-what-to-do-about-it/>)

There is also a famous Microsoft study that determined our attention spans were down to 8 seconds or less.

Not good news – especially when they determined the attention span of goldfish was also 8 seconds.

(<https://www.gadgets360.com/mobiles/news/microsoft-study-finds-human-attention-span-has-dropped-to-just-8-seconds-693468>)

*The big question here for me is: How did they determine the attention span of goldfish????*

Attention spans are important – not just for learning – but what is our corporate attention span?

Can we – a local church – a broad and diverse group of Jesus followers – stay focused on the task / the mission?

We read in **Acts 2:42, 46-47**

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”

“And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

“...they devoted themselves” – stayed focused on the work – the mission.

They committed to it – and stayed committed!

Their attention span was long.

They didn't drift from the mission.

They were fixed and remained intent on the mission Jesus gave them.

Why?

Why were they so intent and fixed on the mission of Christ?

Because they had been changed by the gospel.

How?

Because of the reality of the gospel – the priority of Jesus – His death – His resurrection – His forgiveness – His new life!

Behind the gospel is Jesus.

The reality and priority of Jesus.

God-man – God incarnate – fully human – fully divine.

They lived in a culture with a lot of distractions.

Granted, not the same distractions we have.

But they had distractions of staying alive – if we can call those things distractions.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> century, it took a great deal of effort and focus on the basics of life – food, drink – staying healthy.

The amount of time it took to see to the basics of everyday life was much greater for them than for us today.

So, they had less time to focus on the Christian mission – yet they were vigilant – and steady.

*I would propose they were able to do this – because they understood the person – nature – and identity of Jesus in a very, real way.*

The Apostles spent a lot of time talking about the deity of Jesus.

Jesus was very clear in the declarations of His deity.

It's recorded in **John 10** that the Jewish religious establishment wanted to kill Jesus - not because of His works or miracles, but they said, “...for blasphemy, because You, being a man, make Yourself God.” (John 10:33)

For the early Church – they kept Christ as their priority because they understood His nature – His person – which was the motivation behind the evangelistic power of the first generation of Christians.

Look at it from this perspective...

The miracles Jesus performed – the people He healed – even His resurrection – were all a result of His divinity.

He was able to do these things because He was God incarnate – God in human flesh.

Turn to **Colossians 1:15-18** – p. 983.

In **Colossians 1**, Paul gives what might be the fullest description of the deity of Jesus.

**My main point today is that Jesus must be our priority – because Jesus is God.**

Since He is God – everything else takes a back seat.  
Everything else is secondary.  
He must be first – preeminent – our greatest priority!

**Jesus is primary over all creation.** vs. 15-16

vs. 15 - “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.”

We know from **Genesis 1** that we – man and woman – we were made in the image of God.

**Genesis 1:27** “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female He created them.”

This means we are unique among all other animals in the creation.

We alone are made “in the image of God.”

Physically and biologically we share many things with other animals.

But we alone can reason...

We can think abstractly...

Comprehend morality...

We understand beauty...

We possess emotion...

We express will...

We understand artistry, creativity, and craftsmanship...

We have complex language...

We experience love.

Nothing else in the creation is like us – we are unique – the pinnacle of God’s creation (see Psalm 8).

Even though the 2<sup>nd</sup> member of the Triune God took on flesh – became incarnate and was given the name ‘Jesus’, He was like us – but He was more than us. Jesus wasn’t made in God’s image – like we are.

### **Jesus is God’s image.**

**Hebrews 1:3**

“He (Jesus) is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature...”

NASB / NIV = “...the exact representation of His nature...”

“He is the image of the invisible God...”

God is spirit (John 4) – and therefore invisible.

Jesus was material – physical – and therefore He is the “exact representation” of the invisible God.

### **He makes God visible.**

This was one of the reasons for the incarnation – to reveal God to us.

To make God visible – in a sense, to put God on display.

vs. 15 - “He is the image of the invisible God...”

“image” = Greek: *eikon* – an image, statue, representation.

Paul is limited by words – which only go so far – but Jesus was more than a statue or some representation – so Paul continues to describe Him for us.

“...the firstborn of all creation” – does not refer to chronology.

The Greek term here – ‘*prototokos*’ - denotes Jesus is the premier one – the special place of privilege, prestige, honor – unique among all others.

**Psalm 89:27**

“And I will make Him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.”

We saw a picture and application of this in **Revelation 5**, when John sees God – sitting on the throne – with a scroll in His hand – and it had 7 seals – and an angel asks, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?” (5:2) **vs. 3-4** “And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it.”

But then John was told, “Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that He can open the scroll and its seven seals.”

Jesus has conquered – because He is God – and He will take back the universe – establish His kingdom – and He will usher in the New Heaven and New Earth.



**vs. 16** - Paul now details what Jesus did – that shows He is primary over all of creation.

“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.”

Jesus is primary because He was the agent of creation. All of creation – heaven and earth – everything visible and invisible [in the spirit realm] – Paul tells us they “...were created through Him and for Him.”

Jesus created all things – and all things were created for Him – for His glory – to display His power and preeminence.

**John 1:3**

“All things were made through Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made.”

When **Genesis 1** says, “And God said...”, it is speaking of the creative work of Jesus.

**John 1:1-2**

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.  
He was in the beginning with God.”

This is both a statement about Jesus – “the Word” – and a Trinitarian statement.

It reveals the divine nature of Jesus – the eternal nature of Jesus – and it also reveals the plurality of God – the Triune nature of God.

**The eternal power of Jesus.** vs. 17

“And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.”

He is the creator of all things – so He must be there  
“before all things” are created.

**Revelation 22:13**

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”

In these verses we see the deity of Jesus.

God the Father wasn't the only eternal being – and then created Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

Paul reveals Jesus was “before all things” – meaning nothing existed prior to Jesus.

***Nothing existed before Jesus / before God.***

It doesn't mean Jesus was created first.

Paul says, “He is before all things...” – simply asserting the eternal existence of Christ.

**John 10:30**

“I and the Father are one.”

The Trinity is a large truth to comprehend fully.

Jesus – is God.

Yet God is 3 persons – 1 nature.

Father – Son – Holy Spirit

1 essence – 3 persons.

Jesus – being God – is eternal – “before all things”, but He is also the reason the world – the universe is intact.

vs. 17b – “...in Him all things hold together.”

Hebrews 1:3b

“...He upholds the universe by the word of His power.”

We know from modern science that everything is made up of atoms.

Every atom has a nucleus – and each nucleus is comprised of neutrons – and protons.

Protons have a positive charge – and they repel each other – like charges repel.

But the nucleus of atoms remains together.

Why?

Scientists describe 4 kinds of power in the universe – and 1 of them is called the ‘*strong nuclear force*’.

It’s this force which holds the protons and neutrons together.

How does it do this?

Where does this ‘*strong nuclear force*’ come from?

Nobody knows.

Some believe this ‘*strong nuclear force*’ is the sustaining power of Christ.

“...in Him all things hold together...”

“...He upholds the universe by the word of His power.”

Jesus is primary over all creation...

Because He is God.

Because He is the Creator.

Because He is eternal – “before all things”.

Because the creation is held together by Him.

**Jesus – the priority for the Church.** vs. 18-19

If your body does not have its head – that is not a good thing.

You will be dead.

When we read that Christ is the head of the Church – that is a statement of His worth – and how important He is to the Church.

“And He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent.

For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell...”

vs. 18a - “And He is the head of the body, the church.”

**How many churches today try and operate without their head?**

**Christian Science...** 100,000 – 400,000 members – denies the deity of Christ.

**Iglesia Ni Cristo (Church of Christ) ...** 2.3 million members – 3<sup>rd</sup> largest religious group in the Philippines – deny the deity of Christ.

(<https://christianity.stackexchange.com/questions/81459/which-christian-denominations-do-not-believe-that-jesus-existed-prior-to-his-con>)

**False Religions that Deny the Trinity**

Cult groups: Mormons (LDS) and Jehovah’s Witnesses

These are religious groups that are clear in their denial of the deity of Jesus.

But I would propose the larger problem we have in modern Western Christianity is not the false teaching from false religions and cultic groups, *but from Christian churches who say they believe in Jesus as God – but live in denial of that truth.*

On paper or in their statement of faith – these churches - many of them are among the mainline denominations - their statement of faith says they believe in the deity of Jesus – but they don't in practice.

They don't abide by what their stated beliefs are. They have created a Jesus of their own making. One that suits their own agendas, morals, and political passions.

This results in many Christians – who are submitting to the leadership of their church – but they are being led astray.

When you strip Christ of His deity – you strip Him of His authority – His righteousness – His atoning sacrifice – His power!

- Maintaining a high view of Christ.
- Remaining faithful to Christian orthodoxy.

- Remaining faithful to the clear truths of God’s Word – no matter what the cultural pressures might be.

This is what we’re called to.

This is what I am committed to – what the staff of this church is committed to – what the leadership of this church is committed to – and I hope and pray what every one of you is committed to!

Upholding and proclaiming the deity of Jesus – the incarnate Son of God!

**vs. 18b** – “He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead...”

This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> time in these verses that we see this term: “firstborn”.

Remember, this does not refer to chronology – but to the rank – or the position – the prestige – the honor of Jesus above all other things.

“from the dead” – Since Paul has shifted from creation to the Church – he elevates the position of Jesus as the primary example of resurrection.

Jesus was raised – which is the promise and proof that those who are *‘in Christ’* will also be raised to new life.

“...that in everything He might be preeminent.”

The priority of Jesus – His preeminence – is due to His nature / His deity – and here, due to His resurrection – His defeat over sin and death.

**NIV** = “...so that in everything He might have the supremacy.”

**NASB** = “...so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.”

**NLT** = “So He is first in everything.”

If Jesus isn't our priority.

If He isn't supreme in our life – first over everything else.

Then what is He?

What do you place over Him – as superior to Him?

### ***Apply it...***

As we begin a new year – how do these truths affect how you live?

Know the truth about the nature of Jesus.

Let the Bible be your authority – your source of truth – as to who and what Jesus is.

Don't let voices that are popular in the culture be your guide.

Let the Bible light your path to truth.

He is not just another great leader – great teacher.

He is not a spiritual leader like other leaders throughout history.

He is not a convenient 'Genie' you turn to when you need something – when you have a wish you want granted – or to bail you out of a bad situation.

He is Lord – He is King – He is God – He is the one and only Savior – the Creator – the Sustainer – the righteous Judge!

Make Jesus the priority in your life.

Putting Him 1<sup>st</sup> – supreme – preeminent – is the only option.

Where else will you put God?

As the priority in your life – what does that look like?

- Believe in Him as your Savior.
- Obey Him – He is your Lord.
- Your identity is in Him – not some other category or group. If He is your priority, then first and foremost, you are a disciple of Jesus!
- Trust Him with your life decisions – how you live.
- Be an active part of His body – the church.
- Be committed to His kingdom – for His glory.
- Tell others about Him!

*Close in prayer*