

This morning I want to do something that should come as no surprise. I want to talk about Jesus. But not just any conversation about Jesus. Like Paul, I want to preach Christ and preach him crucified and not with any eloquent words. I want to do it through a passage that is, in many ways, unparalleled in Scripture with regards to what it says about who he is and what he has accomplished. If we don't get those two things right, we can't have a loving relationship with Jesus and we won't live with the peace and security of our identity and salvation. And, if those two things are messed up, the free and abundant life Jesus promises will allude us.

If you do a web search for the question "Who is Jesus?", you get a variety of answers. Half of them are Billy Graham sermons! But others say what he says: Jesus is Lord, Savior, Son of God, creator. Others, though, have a different view. Some believe he's a myth, others a teacher, rabbi, fraud, or magician. Some say he's fully man, but not really God. Some make a distinction about him being the Son of God, but not God himself. One of my favorites was a lady who said, "Jesus was a really cool dude who lived a long time ago and gave great advice to people...and it all snowballed from there." She's right! What would you say? Because how you answer that question is the most important decision you'll ever make in your life, for this life and the next.

As we continue in our series in Colossians, Paul will answer that question. This young church was being drawn away by teachings that questioned Jesus' supremacy and sufficiency and they began doubting he is enough. While the teachers and ideas may be different, we too face that same temptation. Thankfully, a thorough understanding of the person of Christ is the best safeguard against heretical teaching, and we will get that today. If you are here searching and asking the question "Who is Jesus?", there's an answer for you today. If you are here and have been entertaining non-biblical ideas about Jesus, whether intentional or not, God wants to give you clarity so you can hold fast to what you have believed. And if you are here this morning and believe everything we'll read, be encouraged and strengthened. So, let's get the answer to who he is and what he's done for us so we can live fully in light of it?

If Christ is supreme, he is worthy of our worship and devotion. For us to have a relationship with Jesus, we must know who he is. And when we know who he is, we'll respond appropriately.

[Colossians 1:15-18] ¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 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. ¹⁸ 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.

Most would say the theme of Colossians is Christ's preeminence, a word that means supreme, superior, to have first place. We have to get this right because nothing good follows if we don't believe it or live as if it's true. We will all worship something, and if it isn't God, it's usually ourselves. If Jesus is who the Bible says he is, our heart should be devoted to no one else. So who is he?

V15 says Jesus is the image of the invisible God. In a digital world we think of a picture of someone. Paul uses the word *eikon*, which makes us think of Greek and Roman statues. But it's

more than that. Jesus is the very substance of God. In him the nature and being of God have been perfectly revealed. When we see Jesus, we see God. That means the eternal, all-powerful, all-knowing, invisible God chose to reveal himself not in a photo or marble statue, but as a man. That tells us not only who he is but gives us a clue as to why he's come. He must be up to something. If someone knocks on your door, if they come in person to your home, they want something. Our God revealed in Jesus wants something. What could it be?

He is also called firstborn of all creation. It's a clue what he's up to. We might hear "firstborn" and think he was created. Jehovah's Witnesses do, but they add "other" six times in this passage to say he was created and he created "other" creation. But you don't find that word in the original Greek. To understand what Paul is saying you must go back to the Old Testament. In Jewish families, the firstborn son was the heir to all the father had. It was a title that declared priority of birth and also dignity and superiority. We still favor things like that. Over the years, Christian has been given privileges and responsibility over his brothers because he's the oldest. When Paul uses it about Jesus, he's declaring Jesus precedes creation (reinforced by v17, before all things), a function of time, and he is sovereign over it, a function of rank. He is God the Father's heir, and you know what he's going to give him? Us! A redeemed creation!

First reaction: how does this jive with what you believe? Is this the Jesus you know? Do you struggle with the idea that Jesus existed, that God came as a man, that he's not one of many gods to choose from but the one true God? Is he a really cool dude who lived long ago and gave great advice, but you struggle to go beyond that? Paul would tell you he is the supreme sovereign of creation. Do you believe it? Let's keep going.

V16 says he is the creator of all things. A creature does not create, only God does. He is not part of the created world, he is God the Father's agent of creation. "For by him, **all things** were created." This is the first of five times Paul uses "all things" to show the vastness of Jesus' influence and rule. There is nothing that exists that was not created by him, nothing that does not fall under his dominion. That includes both the physical and spiritual world.

Not only were all things created by him, they were created for him. He's both the cause and the reason. This is the original intent of Christ's creative work. God created you for himself. **You are of infinite worth to an infinite God who wants to have a relationship with you for infinity!** Where do you get your value, your worth? Stuff, accomplishment, likes, looks, attention, winning. **If Jesus is supreme, what he thinks about you is all that matters.** From the beginning, he created you and me to be a people for himself; to dwell with, to love, to know. When you are looking for affirmation from the world that is fickle, when you beat yourself up, when you struggle with who you are, remember you are made by Jesus, for Jesus, and there is no greater statement of worth available. He is supreme. What he says goes. And as we'll see here in a few minutes, he did something to make sure that plan did not fail.

V17 says he holds all things together. He sustains a world that is broken by sin and prevents it from falling into chaos. **If he holds it together, he is your help when things fall apart.** I know it's looked like the world is falling apart the last couple of years, but do you realize what a promise this is? The power of the one who can make something from nothing is available to you in your circumstances. There is nothing outside of his control, and what he allows he allows for

his glory and our growth. And if he loves you enough to create you for himself, how much more will he draw near to you in your suffering? I have some friends going through a loss in their family, and their response has been to sing hymns and read Scripture because the God who made them is the God who sustains them in this time. Even in the darkest of days, we can wake up and say, “God’s got this.” But that’s only true if he is supreme. He is.

Now, in v18, things begin to shift. While Paul has focused on creation, he now directs his attention to a new creation. This new creation is only possible because the power that raised Jesus from the dead is available to all, and when it is received by faith, that person’s present and future are changed forever. By defeating death, Jesus is the first of a multitude who will one day be raised from the dead to a glorified, immortal body. That’s the hope we hold on to. But that resurrection power is at work now. This new creation is called the Church. We have been united to Christ and he is our preeminent head. What God intended in the beginning has been restored.

Look at what Paul is showing us here. Jesus is the creator who created us for himself, and who reigns and sustains us as the sovereign Lord. Sin attempted to thwart that plan, so Jesus is also the re-creator. His new life gives us new life, creating a people for him and in him, whom he is the sustaining head. **JESUS WILL NOT LET US GO.** He is the author of life and the author of new life. He is supreme in creation, and supreme in his new creation, and he is worthy of our worship.

But we must remain connected and submitted to him. I’m going to make a profound biological statement here. If any of us lose our head, we won’t last very long. I don’t even have a biology degree! It’s the same for the Church. Instead of remaining connected to the head, we can make people, programs, songs, preferences, cultural pressures supreme. If that happens, we won’t last very long. That’s why we worship every Sunday. It’s why I confess my utter dependence on God and pray “Lord, let me make much of you.” That should be all of our prayers. Any of you here looking for a church, I encourage you to look first and foremost if Jesus is the head. If not, run. I commit that we are all about that. He is worthy to be preeminent, and when he is, we will know him, become who he wants to make us, and do the work he calls us to.

Those are four of the most magnificent verses in all of Scripture. If you ever find your faith has grown stale, struggle to worship, tempted to look elsewhere, saturate your mind with those glorious truths and take them to heart. **They will change you because, when you believe who Jesus is, you’ll never be the same.** He is Supreme. He is enough.

But for us to declare that, we must recognize not only who he is but what he has done for us. **If Christ is sufficient, he warrants our faith and hope.** If there is more work to be done to make us right with God, Jesus is neither supreme nor sufficient. But if he did it all, he’s both.

[Colossians 1:19-22] 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.

Sin separates and kills. It created a chasm between us and God and we couldn't make our way back to him. Thankfully, he made his way to us. The Bible is not a story of our search for God but a story of God's rescue of us. We are the ones who needed to be reconciled to him, not him to us, because we were far off. We couldn't meet him halfway. It wasn't going to take some of God's work and some of ours. He had to be enough, and he was. He did everything needed to make us right with God.

But Paul tells us he didn't do it begrudgingly or with resentment. He was pleased to take on flesh and dwell among us and was pleased to do whatever it was going to take to make things right. Jesus' incarnation is proof of his love for us, his devotion to the original plan, and his joyful willingness to pay the price to bring us back to God.

So what did he do? He climbed upon the cross, suffered unjustly at the hands of wicked men, took upon himself the punishment that was due to you and me and died the death you and I deserve. **Through the breaking of his body, he fixed what was broken.** Through his death on the cross, he reconciled creation to himself, and through his death, he made salvation possible for anyone who would accept his work on their behalf.

The Colossians were told Jesus isn't enough. God had more to give of himself than Christ. There were other ways. But if the cross isn't enough to reconcile us to God, then our God is wicked and not worthy of our worship. Today we hear there must be many ways to God. But if that's true, if the cross wasn't necessary or not enough, God is evil. Why else would the Father subject his Son to that? Are there other ways? No. Even Jesus checked one last time to make sure. But there isn't. **It wouldn't have been enough.** Without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness of sins. So our supreme and sufficient savior was pleased to do it to honor his Father and to create a new people for himself.

The result? Peace. A new humanity. A new relationship with our God. A new identity. "You who once were..." is a glorious statement. Before Jesus, we were hostile to God, wicked in your heart, and capable of only evil. But because Jesus is enough, you are now eternally different. Done terrible things in your life? That's who you once were. Cheated on your spouse, put yourself on the throne of your life, indulged your flesh at every turn, used people for your own purposes, ran hard after idols, cursed God? That's who you once were. There is nothing you could ever do to make up for it. But Jesus could and did. He is enough. And because he did, you who once were all those things are now holy, blameless, and above reproach.

So what do we do with this? If you've never received this gift that Jesus offers, you do so by placing your faith in him, taking credit for the life he lived, and letting his sacrifice pay for your sins. For those of you who have already done that, Paul closes with this application.

[Colossians 1:23] ²³ ...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.

If you are venturing away to another gospel, come back and stand on the stable foundation of Christ. If you are growing weary in your faithfulness in the Lord, go back to the beginning and be inspired and encouraged by what you have believed. If you are looking for hope apart from

Jesus, confess, and declare again that he is supreme and sufficient and hold fast to the hope that is found only in him.

There is no other like him, no other who can do what he does, no other we need for life today and in eternity. He is supreme. He is sufficient. He is enough.