

That's My King!

Colossians 1: 15-18

**First Presbyterian Church
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This morning we're considering the first part of one of the earliest Christian worship songs. Paul's words are a hymn of praise, describing the glory of Jesus Christ, God's Beloved Son. You can just feel the passionate admiration Paul has for the Savior who had claimed him. Jesus "is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created." Paul declares without hesitation that the man Jesus of Nazareth is the active creator of the universe. And though we can't see God, when we saw Jesus of Nazareth we were seeing the exact representation of who God is, in a man. These ideas are explosive. They erupt in our minds, overflowing with wonder. How can this be? That a man we touched and saw was also the eternal Son of God by whom all things were made?

Paul begins by telling us that Jesus, the Beloved Son, is the spitting image of his Father. In Greek, the text tells us that Jesus is the *icon* of God. These days when we think of an icon, we think of the little symbol on our computer. Click the big Compass and take a Safari through the whole world of the internet. Click the Wand Microsoft Word is immediately available so that you can create whole books ready for publication or just jot notes-it's all there. The icon is the visible symbol for a whole range of possibilities. Click on Jesus and you get all the riches of God himself. We enter the fullness of God through Christ.

Another way we use the word icon these days is when we say that a movie star or sports figure is *iconic*. Show a picture of Audrey Hepburn and everything that is graceful elegance comes to mind. Show a picture of Tom Brady and, love him or hate him, the dude is the NFL quarterback. An iconic figure says volumes just by his or her image. So, Jesus is the icon of God. See Jesus and you see the character, the personality, the promises, the purpose and plan of the one true God who before Jesus had been invisible.

Of course, there's a crucial difference. Audrey Hepburn was not herself the essence of womanhood and the big blue E is not the internet. Jesus is not only the *image* of God. He *is* God. As Paul says later, "in him all the fullness of deity dwells bodily (1:19, 2:9)." Jesus is God made flesh. Hebrews tells us that Christ is the exact representation of God's being (1:3, NIV). He is the human imprint of

very God. See Jesus and you see God. Touch Jesus and you touch God. God is nothing other than what he is toward us in Jesus Christ. When we are dealing with Jesus, we are dealing with God.

I just need to remind you, as I have said before, that no other religion says anything this grand about its founder. No one says, "See Mohammed and you see God. Hear the words of Buddha and hear God. Read about Abraham and you read about God." Great founders of religions are revered by their followers for how they point us to God or the gods or to the *all* of the universe. But no one has consistently and coherently linked a person to the fullness of God. Only Jesus. And remember, these words were written within the lifetime of people who knew Jesus and spoke to him. There was no time for legends to have developed. Too many eyewitnesses existed who could have spoken to the contrary. But as Christians, we cry out with Thomas. When he saw the resurrected Jesus he said, against every ounce of training he'd received from Judaism, "My Lord and my God" (John 20: 28).

Now right here, I'm tempted to take off into a theology lesson about the person and work of Christ. But I'm going to resist that impulse and turn us a different direction. S.M. Lockridge was for forty years the pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in San Diego. He was a colleague of both Billy Graham and Martin Luther King. He became world famous as a preacher, especially for his sermon "That's My King." It's been a long time since we've listened in on Pastor Lockridge. I can't think of a better way to reflect on the preeminence of Jesus in Colossians 1 than through an excerpt from his sermon. Listen now to his words about Jesus, our King:

That's My King
(S.M. Lockridge)

The Bible says My King is the King of the Jews.
He's the King of Israel.
He's the King of righteousness.
He's the King of the ages.
He's the King of Heaven.
He's the King of Glory.
He's the King of Kings and He's the Lord of lords.
That's my King.
I wonder do you know Him?

My King is a Sovereign King.
No means of measure can define his limitless love.
He's enduringly strong. He's entirely sincere.
He's eternally steadfast. He's immortally graceful.
He's imperially powerful. He's impartially merciful.
Do you know Him?

He's the greatest phenomenon that has ever crossed the horizon of this world.
He's God's Son. He's the sinner's Savior.
He's the centerpiece of civilization.
He's unparalleled. He's unprecedented.
He's the loftiest idea in literature.

He's the highest personality in philosophy.
He's the fundamental doctrine of true theology.
He's the only one qualified to be an all sufficient Savior. I
wonder if you know Him today?

He supplies strength for the weak.
He's available for the tempted and the tried.
He sympathizes and He saves.
He strengthens and sustains.
He guards and He guides.

He heals the sick. He cleansed the lepers.
He forgives sinners. He discharges debtors.
He delivers the captive. He defends the feeble.
He blesses the young. He serves the unfortunate.
He regards the aged. He rewards the diligent
And He beautifies the meek.
I wonder if you know Him?

He's the key to knowledge. He's the wellspring of wisdom
He's the doorway of deliverance.
He's the pathway of peace. He's the roadway of righteousness
He's the highway of holiness. He's the gateway of glory
Do you know Him?

Well, His light is matchless. His goodness is limitless
His mercy is everlasting. His love never changes.

His word is enough. His grace is sufficient
His reign is righteous. And His yoke is easy and his burden is light

I wish I could describe him to you.
Yes, He's indescribable. He's incomprehensible
He's invincible. He's irresistible
You can't get Him out of your mind.
You can't get Him off your hands.
You can't outlive Him and you can't live without him.

Well, the Pharisees couldn't stand Him,
But they found out they couldn't stop Him.
Pilate couldn't find any fault in Him. Herod couldn't kill Him.
Death couldn't handle Him. And the grave couldn't hold Him.
That's my King, that's *my* King!

Isn't that fabulous? Lockridge thrills me with feelings that in Jesus I have found what I've been searching for. I've come to the very meaning and purpose of my life. Jesus is the center of all things. By him all things were made. And for him all things were made. Through him all things hold together. He is the beginning and the end. He is the source and the goal. He is the one with whom we have to do. He is the one who brings together in himself all things, things in heaven and things on earth.

Knowing this Jesus is knowing a secret that sustains you amidst the madness. It's an open secret. Anyone can know him. But it's so deeply personal that it seems like a secret stream inside us, watering us through all our lives. Living **KBS** means knowing that real life is the life you have in the Kingdom of the Beloved Son who loves you and gave his life for you. You see what so many others do not see. Real life is not the crazy class system of high school. The exhausting competitions between ambitious young adults. The absurd and rude rhetoric of politics. The unfettered sensuality marketed to us as the good life. It's not retiring to spend your last years merely amusing yourself. It's not even whatever next experience, possession or promotion you think will satisfy you at last.

Real life is realizing that the Creator of the universe has embraced you as his brother, as his sister. He lives inside you and invites you to join him in a mission to transform the world. He will live through you to enable you to live out who you were created to be. Now our goals and dreams, our drive and ambition, our

success achievements are not wrong necessarily. They may be great pursuits. And yield great rewards. As long as they were held in the right balance. And it's knowing the King, knowing Jesus enables you to see through the world's game. Any popularity you achieve is in order that you might show people a better way than the silly fight for the top. Your achievements are wonderful, but they're not just for you to enjoy prizes. There's nothing wrong with achievement. But achievement is in order to become someone whose skills can bless the world and glorify the creator. You know the secret-Jesus is the center of the universe.

I read recently about the faith journey of a famous Swiss artist who rose to prominence in the 60's. Raised Catholic, when he reached adulthood, this painter interacted with all the famous existential philosophers and Avant-garde artists of his day. He travelled the world exhibiting his paintings and exploring other cultures. He made a choice to leave behind his Christian faith and pursue the spiritual disciplines contained in Buddhist and Hindu traditions. He became a master of meditation, training his mind to live in the now, the present awareness of the great All. This artist became a guru for many spiritual seekers.

But the hound of heaven was after him. Decades later, while out meditating in a forest, our artist suddenly felt like his mind was invaded with a presence from beyond him. He writes:

I knew the words of Christ: "I am the way, the truth and the life, and no one comes to the Father except through me." But, in the past, I had considered those words somewhat presumptuous. Now these words struck me at the center of my being. After 35 years of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Taoism, I was being drawn to "that God". Nevertheless there was present in me a profound rejection of everything concerning Christianity. Slowly, I felt a strange sensation come over me that was entirely new and that I had never experienced before. I perceived the presence of Someone who was emanating extraordinary power.

Those words of Christ [I am the way, the truth and the life] haunted me; they became a nightmare. I resisted, but the interior sound was amplified and was like an echo in my conscience. I found myself close to panicking; I was losing control of my mind, and after 30 years of deep meditation that was inconceivable to me. "Yes, it's true, you are right," I cried, "it is true, it is true, but stop, please I beg you."

I fell to the ground and lost consciousness. But before that happened I felt myself enveloped by a love without limits... I was dying to a past to which I was profoundly conditioned; every truth was disintegrating. I don't know how long I remained there, but when I became conscious, again I was as though reborn. The sky inside my head was absolutely clear, and tears flowed endlessly.

Christ is more real than ever. We need to make people understand that believing in Jesus Christ is something extraordinary and marvelous and enriches life immensely. It opens up a new dimension within our being, and we never again feel alone at the core of our being or our soul. It throws open the door toward that infinite Light... The extraordinary thing about the light of Christ is that, in its essence, it is supreme love.¹

This is what happens when people discover the divine Kingship of Jesus. They don't get lost in a lot of swirly ideas theological debates. They get moved in the core of their beings by a love that envelops them. They meet the Force at the center of the universe and realize that he is personal. He showed himself to us as the man Jesus Christ. He is the one with whom we have to do. He is the source and the goal. He is the point of life right now and the final destination of all things. He is our God and King. If you don't know him, go before him in prayer and ask him to take you as his subject, to be your personal king and most intimate savior. If you do know him, show your loyalty to the King. Leave off your rebel thoughts, your seditious actions and give yourself ever more wholeheartedly to his service. Be faithful so that you can with your whole heart and mind point to the man on the cross and say, "That's my King!"

¹ Raniero Cantalamessa, *Remember Jesus Christ: Responding to the Challenges of Faith in our Time* (Frederick, MD: Word Among Us Press, 2007), 37-9. See also www.masterbee.com for this unnamed artist's work and faith.