



Colossians (Part 1) – He is Above All Things

Mason King – July 27, 2014

Good morning. My name is Mason King. I'm one of the pastors here. If you have a Bible, go ahead and turn to Colossians 1. That's where we'll be this morning. If you don't have a Bible, then we'd love to give you one. You can take the black Bible that is in the seat in front of you. Just grab that. It's on page 983 as Charity mentioned earlier.

Like I said, we'll be here for the next three weeks. I invite you over the next three weeks to just dive into the book of Colossians. If you want to know where we're going to be focused, it's verses 15-29 in chapter 1. We'll take a section each week, and we are here today. Before we get started, I want to pray. I would like you to pray also. I don't just want to pray and have you listen to me.

As I was preparing, I thought, "How should we posture our hearts to come and hear this section of Scripture?" I have two things I would ask you to ask God in prayer. The first one would be that through the power of the Holy Spirit, God would give you eyes to see and ears to hear to beauty of Jesus. The second one is through the proclamation of the Word, that he would be gracious to us, that he would bless our time together, that we could see his Son. If you could, pray with me.

Heavenly Father, I thank you for Christ. As we dive into one of the richest parts of Scripture speaking about your Son, of who he is, Father, I pray our hearts would be humbled, that we would be given eyes to see and ears to hear by your Spirit, the complexity, the majesty, and the wisdom in the gospel and Jesus.

Father, would you bless our time? Would you bless the proclamation of the Word? Even as Christ has promised, when he is lifted up, he will draw men to himself. I pray this morning that we would be able to lift him up, to focus our attention on him, and that you would draw men to him. We pray in Christ's name, amen.

In the beginning of the service, Charity read Scripture for us. She was reading Paul's words to the church and to the saints in Colossae. I want to read you what Paul was praying for them. This is starting in verse 10.

He prayed that they may, "**...walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.**"

Paul is praying for these saints, and he is praying for the kind of life that is overflowing with gratitude, marked by humility and love and joy and peace and patience and kindness. He's praying for a life that is marked by the overflowing of the fruit of the Spirit. We'll go back and look at more. In verse 9, he said, "Before I even wrote to you, we have been praying these things for you, that your mind might be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding."

I think you may agree with me that wisdom and understanding are different than knowledge, right? Wisdom and understanding allow you to look at something, to take something, to see into it and see its beauty so you can begin to understand the *how* and the *why* and the *who* and the *where* and not just get it but to enjoy it, not just figure it out but to look at it and to see its beauty.

Paul is praying this for the saints. He prays that they would find and see the will of God with spiritual wisdom and understanding, that God would take their natural experience, their day-to-day life and, by the power of his Spirit, speak into it and reveal the mystery of the gospel and God's wisdom in Jesus. He prays they would be captivated by it.

There is something with captivation, especially for you and me these days, that we're often most captivated by the things we can control. Sunsets get traded for traffic. You lose sight of what is going on around you because you're busy to get somewhere, probably trying to not look down at your phone as you're in traffic. Anyone? All right. Guilty.

Also, what happens now these days? If you're having a good time with somebody, there is something you really enjoy, and you think, "Man, I wish I could capture this moment." What do you do? You whip out your phone and take a picture. Right? Most of the time, you take that picture, and you're like, "Oh, I have to put it on Twitter or Instagram and share it with somebody."

I read a study the other day that said when you take a photo, your brain actually disengages from the moment where you are, and it doesn't take in as much in its senses because it trusts the photo to capture that moment. Your brain literally goes, "There's a snapshot. I will disengage and not soak in the moment and press into it because I have a snapshot to rely on." Isn't that crazy?

The thing is that in that, we lose our ability to be captivated. We just do. We don't press into things because at a certain point, the things around us become familiar. You've hear about familiarity, right? I would suggest this morning that familiarity doesn't just breed contempt; I would suggest that it breeds unfamiliarity. Familiarity breeds unfamiliarity.

You can assume you know something or somebody. You can get to know them. At a certain point, you just stop pressing into them. You base every interaction with them off your assumptions and opinions from a certain point. Is anyone guilty of this? How does that go in a relationship for you? Not well. It's just not a healthy relationship.

The thing is that we do this with Jesus all the time. We read the Scripture. We learn enough about him from the Word to get a snapshot. Then we go on with our lives. We have our little bit of knowledge, and we move forward. After a while, bit by bit, if we're not pressing into him daily, what happens is that our Jesus gets a little more nuanced, a little more set to our preferences, a little more the God of our own making than the God of the text.

God is so distinct. Christ is so distinct that he has to reveal everything about himself for us to know anything about him, and he does this through the Word. God reveals himself through his Son. Therefore, Paul's prayer for the saints in Colossae, his prayer that they would have spiritual wisdom and understanding is a prayer we need today.

If we're going to look at this next passage speaking of the preeminence of Christ and his beauty, we need spiritual understanding to see into the mystery of the gospel of Jesus. Read with me beginning in verse 15 of chapter 1.

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all 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. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 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, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross."

My prayer for today and even right now is that the Lord would give us spiritual wisdom and understanding. Verse 15. **"He is the image of the invisible God..."** Hebrews 1 says, **"He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature..."** Second Corinthians 4 says, **"...the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God..."**

In John 14, you can hear Jesus saying to Philip, **"Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father."** As I mentioned earlier, God reveals himself to us; we don't discover him. If you want to know about God's character, look at Jesus. I'd recommend you go and read the book of Hebrews.

Take a pen and a paper, sit down, read the book of Hebrews, and every time it gives a character attribute of Christ or an action he has taken on our behalf, write it down. Finish the whole book, and then look at your list. He is the invisible made visible, the radiance of the glory of God. The thing is that you and I have heard that before. Whether you've grown up in church or not, you know that Christ is the Son of God, and it is so far out of our daily experience that I fear we would go, "Yeah, I know what that means."

He is beyond our ways, and God the Son... We just can't assume we know. We need wisdom to see into him. We need understanding to look and to see the beauty of God's purposes in him. We need the weight of Christ to bear on our souls, and we need him. **"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation."**

In honor, in family cultures, the firstborn child is the one with the birthright, the inheritance. He's the one who is supposed to be most responsible and to provide. I want to tell you that *firstborn* also means rank or superiority; it doesn't have to do with being born. Calling Christ the firstborn means that before creation existed, Christ was there. Even now as creation exists, he stands over it and above it.

God the Father didn't create God the Son and then make heaven and earth. God the Son, Christ, existed before time, and through him, all things were made. If you think that God created Christ and then went on to make other things, this next verse is really going to trip you up, and you'll miss the

point of the text. Christ is the image of the invisible God, and before he took on flesh, he stood above creation, above everything you and I know and everything we can't see.

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."** You see, Christ is the agent of creation. He is literally the sphere through which God has made everything. He has made the world. He has made you and me in the image of God. He has made the universe all through Christ, all through him and for him.

Hear John 1. **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men."** Jesus stands as firstborn over creation.

All of it was made through him and for him, meaning that Christ is the common end and the common goal of all of creation, everything, which means Jesus wasn't plan B. things didn't get set up, and then they went bad, and God said, "What am I going to do? I'll send Christ." It meant that before creation, Christ existed. The wisdom of God was set. He was plan A all along.

As one author puts it, "Christ is the agent of God and the whole range of his gracious purpose toward the human race, from primeval work of creation through the redemption accomplished at history's midpoint and on to the new creation in which the divine mystery will be consummated." Jesus was the plan all along. All things find their end in him.

As you read the epistles in the New Testament, you know that the authors wrote to these congregations' very specific purposes. They wrote to correct sin. They wrote to teach about Christian living. They wrote to correct false teaching. Paul is writing to these saints. He's correcting false teaching. He doesn't explicitly outline what it is, but from context clues, you can kind of put some pieces together.

The teaching is something that would exalt the angelic realm. It would exalt these bringers of divine knowledge who have a special revelation from God, and it would have people be distracted from honoring Christ for who he is, the supremacy of Christ, the deity of Christ. It would have them be distracted, to look at these other things.

Paul is very specifically saying... He lists out the angelic realms. You notice this. He listed out, and he said, "Thrones, dominions, rulers, authorities. None of them have a claim on the authority and the power of Christ." There is one mediator between God and man, one final voice on our status before God, one final revelation of God's wisdom. It's Jesus.

It brings assurance to me, and I really hope it would for you too, if you believe in Christ, that in the middle of suffering, in the middle of failure, depression, doubt, trial, attack, you would hear that he stands over every created realm, and you would hear the apostle Paul in Romans 8. **"For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."**

Verse 17. **"And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together."** The truth of who Christ is, that he is the goal of all creation, that he is the shining beauty of God's wisdom, the radiance of his glory, and that he came to us that he would be made like us, and he would come to us who have sick hearts, sick with sin, hearts that not only want wrong but are able to do it, that he would come and spend his life, sacrifice himself to be able to offer us a new heart, and not just a new heart, but one that is capable of doing good and one that wants to do good.

He died. He was buried. He rose from the grave, defeating death. Now he sits at the right hand of the Father, and one day, he is coming back, the Lion of Judah, King Jesus. He is coming back. This truth of Christ, that he stands over all creation, at this moment is either terrifying or beautiful. Where you are in your reaction tells you who your Jesus is. Is your Savior the God of the text or a God of your own options and preferences, of your desires and your disbelief? You see, he is before all things, and in him, all things hold together.

I ask you, at this moment in your life, what is there? What is there Christ did not precede and does not stand over in power? Maybe the better question is where have you believed a little less that he is who he says he is, given your circumstances? Is it in sickness? Is it in your fight against sin? Is it in loss? See, around here, we talk a lot about how being frustrated with our circumstances is kind of a nice way to say we think we can run our lives better than God can.

No one is going to be that blunt, are you? You're not going to say, "Hey, I think I got it. I'll take it from here." Every day, we prove this with questioning the role of his sovereignty, with questioning the way he does things. "Why don't I have this? That would be real nice." We get frustrated. I was

really refreshed this week. I was reading. There is a book of letters by an 18th century preacher named John Newton. He wrote something here to a friend. I really wanted to share it with you. He's so honest. It's very helpful.

He says, "I would not indulge vain reasoning concerning the counsels, ways, and providences of God; yet I am prone to do it. That the Judge of all the earth will do right—is to me as evident and necessary as that two plus two make four. I believe that he has a sovereign right to do what he will with his own, and that this sovereignty is but another name for the unlimited exercise of wisdom and goodness.

But my reasoning are often such, as if I had never heard of these principles, or had formally renounced them! I feel the workings of a presumptuous spirit, that would account for everything, and venture to dispute whatever it cannot comprehend. What an evil is this—for a potsherd of the earth, to contend with its Maker!

I do not act thus towards my fellow-creatures; I do not find fault with the decisions of a judge, or the dispositions of a general, because, though I know they are fallible—yet I suppose they are wiser in their respective departments than myself. But I am often ready to take this liberty with God—when it is most unreasonable and inexcusable!"

In sickness. The brother of a friend of mine has been battling cancer for a long time. He is not a believer, and the cancer is real bad. It has gone away, and it has come back. Recently, we were talking, and she said, "The fact that Jesus is above all things and before all things gives me hope for my brother. The fact that there is still breath in his body means the Lord isn't done with him, so I pray. Even though I don't understand, I pray."

It's in your struggle with sin. If you're getting owned by your appetites, feel like it's hopeless, that you can't change, I invite you to hear Newton again as he writes to a different friend. He said, "It is by the experience of these evils within ourselves and by feeling our utter insufficiency, either to perform duty or to withstand our enemies, that the Lord takes occasion to show us the suitableness, the sufficiency, the freeness, the unchangeableness of his power and grace."

Our weakness proves our need. He is greater than our weakness, so don't stop coming to him. The role of the Spirit shaping us, making us more like Christ, changing our hearts is a lifelong thing. It's not instantaneous. Keep coming to him. Keep believing.

Is it loss? In the last few months, we've had a couple funerals at the church. We've had parents and spouses that we've buried. Sitting in the service and then thinking of the days past that, I'm so thankful that death is not the end. I'm just thankful. I'm so thankful that Christ has defeated death, and he's going to make all things right. He's going to make all things new.

Is this your Jesus, This who we're talking about who is above all things? There is not a hair on your head unknown to God. There is not a cry of your heart unheard by God. Your deepest need and mine has been secured by a good Father. There is nothing, nothing that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

"And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church." This last month at our campuses has been a pretty tough one. It has been a hard one. I stood at the back of the room and sat with many of you the night we sat here with our elders, and they told us that our campus pastor had been asked to resign.

That night, in the weeks to come, I got a lot of questions and had a lot of conversations. I heard from you guys the uncertainty of, "Can I trust the elders? I don't agree with this. Everything looked fine from where I was." Then, "What are we going to do now?" The press for answers can cause anxiety. Since the staff found out and we began to process the move, I've taken great comfort and great confidence in the fact that Christ is the head of the body.

This season is not a surprise to him. He knows and cares for his bride. The hire of a new campus pastor who is going to join us in August is not a surprise to him. For 2,000 years, since the inception of the church, there have been under-shepherds who have labored and waited for the chief shepherd to appear, and we are all faceless men longing to see his face. Christ is the head of the body, the church. He's going to take care of his bride.

He is the agent of creation, all things made through him and for him. He is the end goal of all things. He is before all things. He is the firstborn of all creation, and all things hold together in him. Verse 18. **"He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent."**

Firstborn from the dead, risen from the grave, conquering death, he stands as the agent of creation and of redemption. Life and new life both in Christ. Our marred and sick hearts, our hearts that not

only can do wrong but want wrong are offered the ability to be made new in him. That's possible because he's not dead, and the grave is empty. He is above all things.

Verse 19. **"For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross."** Because he shed his blood to bring about peace, all things have been reconciled to him. If you read Romans 8, you realize that we as God's children, for those who believe in Christ, are hurting and waiting and groaning to realize the full adoption we'll see in Jesus.

He has made peace for us, reconciling us to him. When we see him, we will be made fully realizing our adoption. You read about the creation, that the creation now is in conflict with its Maker, that it longs and groans for reconciliation, but now peace has been made and one day will be fully realized. This peace is due to the mystery of the gospel, the wisdom of God in Christ Jesus.

Historically, peace has been made in one of two ways: reconciliation or pacification. Reconciliation is where there is a harmony. There is trust restored. Relationship is there. There is true peace as you would think of it. Pacification is accomplished and kept by the presence of a conquering power greater than the enemy.

Think of the Roman Empire. We've heard the phrase *Pax Romana*. There was a period of time in the Roman Empire when no one would mess with the Romans. They were too strong. You realize that all their enemies under their rule lost the ability to resist. I said earlier the truth of God in Christ is a terrifying or beautiful thing. When faced with this truth, when faced with who Christ is, the invisible made visible, the light of the glory of God, your heart will have one of two reactions.

The first one is you may find in yourself an intolerance or a distrust of someone who has that much power or authority. You think, "No one could be that good. No one could be given that much and could be trusted." You don't believe Jesus is who he says he is. You may think he's real, but you won't believe he's God. To you, he's a teacher or a prophet, and you join in with men and women throughout history who would deny the deity of Jesus.

Or you feel your heart warmed to him. You know it in your bones that he is who he says he is, and you trust him, all power and authority. He stands above all things. He is before all things. By spiritual wisdom and understanding, you see him, and you know he's good. The text tells us peace

will be made. You and I will either be reconciled or pacified, and the Jesus you believe in makes the difference. He's either the Christ of the text or of your own making.

If you are reconciled to him, if you would say, "I am a child of God," I would ask you this. In your walk with Christ, are you relying on a snapshot of him? Are you relying on archived footage to walk with him daily, or are you pressing into him? Are you looking for him by the power of the Spirit in your daily life? If you want to know more about him, I'll say what I did earlier. Read the book of Hebrews. Read the book of John. Grab the person who brought you. Ask them about Jesus.

Find one of us with a name badge on. We would love to talk with you and tell you more about Christ. **"And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together."** As we close, I want to remind you there is no sin greater than the blood of Christ, no circumstance outside of his power, no worry in your life today he does not stand over. If you are his, there is nothing and no one who can take you from him. Let's pray.

As we prepare to come to the table, I would ask you to continue to pray for spiritual wisdom and understanding to Jesus. I would tell you that he loves you. He loves you. If you find in your heart today a distrust, if you find, "I don't believe he is who he says he is," my prayer would be that you would. That's the work of the Spirit's. That's going to be his move. Ask him for it.

If you do trust him but say, "Man, it has been a long time since I felt like I've been near him," ask him. We have a good Father, and he has given us Jesus. He has given us his Spirit, so believe. If you have trouble believing, ask for help with your unbelief.

Heavenly Father, I thank you for Jesus. I thank you for a passage like this that we could look at the deity of Christ, understanding just a bit of your wisdom, the beauty of Christ, of how he is above all things. He holds all things together. He is the firstborn from before creation and the firstborn from the dead.

I pray, Father, that we would admit this is beyond us and that you would help us to delight and to see into the complexity of the beauty of Christ and to not only understand a little bit more but to enjoy him, to be delighting in your beautiful, sovereign wisdom. Would you help us, Lord? I pray in Christ's name, amen.