



“He Holds It All Together”

Colossians 1:16-17

December 12, 2021

How many of you are wearing glasses this morning? Raise your hand. Now another question to which the answer is less obvious: how many of you are wearing contact lenses this morning? Just a handful of you are wearing contact lenses. Everybody is seeing clearly, yes? Good. We want to see clearly

In fact, one of the values of our church is to be gaining a clearer, more accurate, view of who God is. We want to see the Lord, and we want to see the Lord as He has revealed Himself in Scripture and we want to see the Lord in the fullness of His glory and in the full extent of all of the attributes that He has revealed to us.

We are all born with a naturally distorted and blurred picture of God, so we praise Him that He gives us a clear picture in the pages of Scripture. This morning we enter into a passage that provides for us one of the clearest portraits of the supremacy and the sufficiency and the exaltation of Jesus Christ to be found in the pages of the Bible.

This morning I pray that each one of us will see Him and that we will see Him as the One who holds all things together. This is truth at the cosmic level of the entire universe. This is the truth at the ecclesiastical level of the global church.

If He is the One who holds all things together throughout the entire expanse of the universe, and if He is the One who holds together all of the people of God across the globe everywhere, it must be true of you and me. He holds you and me together, and we want to acknowledge Him as such.

This is good to take to heart in the midst of all of the pressures, sorrows, perplexities, and the struggles that we face when these things make it feel like we are coming apart at the seams. There is One holding all things together. It is not a force. It is not some law of the universe. It is a Person holding all things and us together.

Let’s see Him revealed to us in Colossians Chapter 1, beginning in Verse 15, which speaks of Christ, the One spoken in the preceding verses as the One who gives redemption; the One who provides forgiveness of sin to those who are trusting in Him.

**<sup>15</sup>He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. <sup>16</sup>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. <sup>17</sup>And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup>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. <sup>19</sup>For in him all the fullness of God was**

**pleased to dwell,<sup>20</sup> and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.**

Based on the writing style and some of the rhythm that is here in this paragraph of Scripture, just like we spoke of last week, many if not most Bible scholars perceive that Paul was perhaps quoting an early hymn of the Christian faith. This may be one of the spiritual songs sung by the earliest Christian communities as their stories are told to us in the book of Acts.

Here in this text, Paul quoted this hymn and brought it before the Colossians and all of us to bring the glory and the supremacy and the sufficiency of Jesus Christ to the people of God in a concise and power-packed and memorable way.

The paragraph that we have read, it presents Jesus to us as the Lord of all creation in the first couple of verses. Then it goes on to present Him as the Lord of the new creation. He is the Lord of all things made and the Lord of all things made new; all of the things redeemed, forgiven of sin and brought into His Kingdom.

Jesus Christ is Lord of all. This morning I want to begin by pointing you to that phrase right toward the middle of what we have just read, where it says that, “He holds all things together.” In the language of the text it says, ‘In Him all things hold together. And I just want you to notice how this is kind of right there toward the middle of this hymn that we are studying together.

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A pastor by the name of Douglas Moo, a Bible scholar who wrote a great book on Colossians, he has some very, very helpful words of perspective on just where the phrase, “In him all things hold together,” is positioned here in this text. Speaking of the verses that I have highlighted in Verses 17 and 18a, Moo identified this portion as the hinge verses which touches on both realms of this early hymn that we are studying. Writing about these verses, Moo says:

“The opening line clearly looks back to vv. 15-16, with their focus on Christ’s relationship to creation, while the last line introduces the focus on Christ’s redemptive work that typifies verses 18-20. The center line—and in him all things hold together—seems to look in both directions and functions not only as the center of this brief strophe but perhaps the hymn as a whole.”

If I can kind of visualize it for you again on the screen, you get a sense of what is right there smackdab in the middle of this spiritual song—In Him all things hold together. That resonates within our hearts. I wonder how many of you can identify with the phrases that follow: I feel like I am losing it. I wonder if anybody has ever had a moment when they felt like that?

I feel like I am coming unglued. The anxieties and the pressures and the perplexities are so great that I feel like I'm being pulled apart. I feel like I am being pulled to pieces. I see a couple of nodding heads out there. I am nodding in my head in agreement with those phrases too because I have felt like that on many occasions. Perhaps not a week goes by when I don't feel like that, if I am being honest with you.

I wonder if the modern hymn writers Keith and Kristyn Getty had that same sense of this when they penned the lyrics of a wonderful song of God.

When I fear my faith will fail  
Christ will hold me fast  
When the tempter would prevail  
He will hold me fast

I could never keep my hold  
Through life's fearful path  
For my love is often cold  
He must hold me fast

I love what is perhaps one of the climatic lines in that song where they sing:

For my Savior loves me so  
He will hold me fast

We need Jesus to hold us together, and Paul wrote this letter to the Colossians that they would keep their eyes on Him; that by the work of the Holy Spirit, they through the teaching of who Jesus is, that they would cling to the One who is all-sufficient; who holds all things together throughout all of the universe and who has power to keep His people together; to enfold them in His grace and in His love through all the trials and the difficulties.

The Bible does not promise that you will live as a Christian in a worry-free, easy life. Actually, what we find in the pages of Scripture is that as we follow Jesus there new difficulties and struggles and trials that do come across our path as a result.

However, through it all, we are never alone. Christ is there. The One who holds all things together is the One who will hold us together. This, having Him revealed to us as the supreme and sufficient One, we must be obedient to the leading of the Spirit, and find our rest and our power in Jesus.

So let's see how Jesus is revealed to us here in this text. Just who is Jesus? Who is the One who was found there in that manger in Bethlehem? Who is the One who grew into mature manhood?

Who is the One who was found nailed to a Roman cross, where He was slain as the Lamb of God for our sin? Who is this One? Here we receive this magnificent portrait of Jesus Christ in all things held together, so let us fall into the grace of the Lord so that in Him we might be held together. Who is Jesus?

Who is the One holding it ALL together? Let's see three aspects of who He is as revealed to us here in this text. First, this text is revealing to us that He is:

### **1. The Preexistent Creator (15:17)**

The preexistent Creator is the One holding all things together—His church—together, and each of His lambs together.

As we read in Verse 17, “He is before ALL things.” This flows out of what Paul had written just previous to that statement that He is the creator of all things. All things have been made by Him. All things have been made through Him. All things have been made for Him. In this, He has the highest rank. He is the very first born of all creation. He is before all things. The One who is before all things is the One holding all the things that he has made together.

This statement, “He is before all things” is a statement of the preexistence of the Son of God. Christ did not emerge from history. He entered into history from eternity. Before anything was created in this vast expanse of this unsearchable universe, Christ was there. One with the Father and the Spirit—the Triune God, the source of all things.

This aspect of the Messiah, His preexistence, was once very powerfully asserted by Jesus Himself. It is in John Chapter 8 and Verses 57 and 58. Some of the pharisees of Israel were taking exception to the familiarity with which Jesus spoke of Father Abraham, whose story is recorded back in the book of Genesis. Verse 57:

**<sup>57</sup>So the Jews said to him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?” <sup>58</sup>Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.”**

There at that moment, Jesus was ascribing to Himself the Holy Name of the Highest Lord, the only Lord, the One God Himself. I am. That is the name that was revealed at that sacred moment when God manifested Himself to Moses at the burning bush.

Moses was told to go and declare unto Pharaoh for the Lord, Set my people free. And Moses asked, Who shall I say sent me? How did God reveal Himself to Moses in that moment? He said, Tell them I am who I am. I am that I am. Tell them I am has sent you.

Under the English I am are the consonants Y W H W. Sometimes it is pronounced Yahweh. Other times it Yehovah. At the heart and the core of this expression is the whole concept of self-existence.

Here Christ declared with authority, Before Abraham was born, I am. Declaring I am the eternal and self-existent one.

Here in Colossians we have Paul continuing in that line of thought. He is the pre-existent One. Christ, as so beautifully expressed in a song that was written by a comedian named Mark Lowry who also knew some theology, Mary Did You Know. He said something like: the one that you are holding in your arms, Mary, is the great I am.

Nothing else in all of creation is self-existent. Everything else in the entire universe has an origin. That origin finds itself in the Triune God. It has been granted existence and its existence must be sustained.

Christ is the one holding the universe together as revealed here in this text. He is before all things and in Him all things hold together. At the microscopic level, it is by His power that electrons continue to circle the nuclei. At the telescopic level, it is in Him that planets continue in their orbit around the sun.

At the ground level, it is in Him that gravity retains its pull. At the biological level, it is in Him that your heart continues to beat and that your blood continues to flow and that your lungs continue to pull in oxygen. Christ, the pre-existent One, sustains the existence of all else.

This is Christ. This is Jesus. This is the One who came into the world and was found in Bethlehem as an infant; the One who grew and who came to shed His blood that in that blood, we might be forgiven of sin; who was raised from the dead that in Him we might have life. This is Christ! He is the One who holds all things together. Church, in the midst of the struggles and in the difficulties you face, fall into Jesus who holds all things together.

There is a second aspect of Christ revealed to us here. Who is it who holds all things together?

## **2. The Head of the Body (15:18)**

Continuing speaking of Jesus now on the other side of the hinge. Moving into the second part of this early hymn,

**<sup>17</sup>And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup>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.**

Now Paul used many pictures and metaphors to describe the church in his writings. We find that the church is the flock of God. We find that the church is the temple of the Holy Spirit. It is the bride of Christ. It is the family of believers. But the most common analogy that we find in the writings of Paul is that the church is the body of Christ.

This metaphor is typically used to emphasize the mutual dependence that all of the different body parts have in one another as God gifts various people in different ways in each and every local church. But here it is used to emphasize the life and the wisdom and the direction that

comes into the community of believers by virtue of being connected to Christ who is the Head. We are alive in Him, our Living Head. We receive truth from Him, our Living Head. We receive direction from Him, who is our Living Head.

Just think of it: the One who has enough wisdom to create solar systems and ecosystems is the One who gives truth and instruction and wisdom to His church through the Holy Scriptures given to us by His very Spirit.

This is our Christ, the One who sustains all things. He gives life into His church by His Spirit, giving life, giving words of doctrine in truth into the community that they might grow and mature and thrive.

So in this knowledge, knowing that He is command central, that He is our Head, and that in the Scriptures we have the mind of Christ, let us seek the Holy Spirit for grace that we will always be taking pains to understand what He has given us in the treasure of the of the Bible.

Do you remember how emphatic Paul was about this, and how he was praying about and for the Colossians, that they would be filled with all spiritual wisdom and understanding to know the will of the Lord? Jesus has revealed Himself and His will in Scripture. What a gift! Jesus said, “The words I speak to you, they are Spirit and they are life.” He is our Head.

We are connected to Him and we want the mind of Christ dwelling within us, lest we counsel one another with mere worldly wisdom and mere opinion. We don’t need to be giving each other our opinions. We need to be giving each other the Word of Christ, which is given to us in the pages of Scripture.

We want the truth of Jesus flowing through us, because you and I are capable of so many faulty notions. So we need to have our minds renewed by the life-giving, nourishing truth that is found in the Bible. Colossians Chapter 3 and Verses 16 is absolutely one of my favorite verses. Speaking to that tiny Colossian church, and speaking to you, Bethel Grace:

**<sup>16</sup>Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.**

Wow, maybe we are looking at one of those spiritual songs right now.

Jesus is our head. He gives us His mind in the pages of Scripture. So, let us pray that the Spirit of God would be at work overcoming our apathy, making each one of us diligent in the pages of Scripture—reading it, disciplining one another in it, encouraging one another in it—because it is in the Word that the life that comes down from the Head fills the church and makes it healthy and fruitful.

Can we just pray that God’s Word will be honored in our midst? That we will see it as the treasure that it is; that we might have the mind of Christ dwelling in us as a body of believers. This is what we want.

There used to be a young man around her by the name of Lance Skifter. He said to me, Jeff, if you ever stray away from the Scripture and you start teaching other things, I'm going to come up there and give you a shoulder check!

Let's teach Scripture! Let's love Scripture and let's ask the Lord to give us a heart for the Word of the Living God, for Christ is our head and we want His mind controlling His church, and it is in His truth that we are held together.

Who is the one holding it all together? There is one more aspect of this that we will give our attention to as revealed to us here in this text. Who is holding us together?

### 3. The Firstborn From the Dead (15:18)

**<sup>17</sup>And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup>And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead**

Now notice how two titles are conjoined in that second sentence of Verse 18. The first explains the second. The second explains the first. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead. That is to say that the same Christ who existed before all creation, is now the beginning of His new creation and that new creation finds its commencement in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead.

Jesus was not the first person raised from death. Jesus Himself raised three people from the dead, did He not? Several hours after her death, He raised up Jairus' little girl. I think she was about twelve years of age.

Similarly, after he possibly had been dead for several hours, Jesus raised up the son of the widow in a town called Nain. Perhaps even more impressive was the raising of Lazarus not several hours after he died, but several days after he died.

Christ raised them from death but each one of them, they experienced resuscitation. They experienced resuscitation, but Jesus experienced resurrection. I think when those three were raised up, they were raised up in better health than they had been in who knows how long.

But they were raised up in mortal bodies. Eventually they died again and those bodies remain dead. I would think that their spirits are alive in the presence of the Lord in the place called Paradise. But their bodies perished.

On the other hand, not only was Christ raised from death but He was the first to be resurrected. He was the first to be raised up in an everlasting, imperishable, glorious body that would never die again. In this way He is the firstfruits of the resurrection.

This language of first born makes Him the first rank of all those who are resurrected. Christ being the Lord of life, being the Creator of all things, is the source and the authority over all resurrection that is yet to come. He is the firstborn of the resurrection.

Christ is alive and He will raise all of those who deny Him unto spiritual judgement and the wrath that is to come for sin. Christ is alive and He will raise those who belong to Him for everlasting life in His Kingdom.

As Christ has been raised, so those who come and take shelter in His grace and who are born again in His grace, and who are made new in His power, someday they are going to be raised up in new imperishable, glorious, powerful, Spirit-saturated bodies, in which we will dwell in the glories of His Kingdom for evermore.

So, brothers and sisters, even though we have Christmas going on all around us right now, we can celebrate Easter too. He is risen! He is risen indeed!! And as we are trusting in Him for forgiveness and new life, He is going to raise us up to be a part of the great resurrection to come.

The Old Testament views the resurrection of physical bodies from the state of death as an eschatological event, signaling the coming of God in final Kingdom power. With Christ, resurrection has entered into this broken world. And He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead.

The idea is that Christ is the founder of a new, redeemed resurrected humanity. In the first Adam the human race was plunged from life into death. In Christ the Last Adam, God's elect are raised from death to life.

He is the beginning of the Redemption. He is the Beginning of the Age to Come. He is the beginning of the great Regeneration. In Christ there is newness of life and the New Covenant grace of God with His coming is unleashed. So the old rite of physical circumcision is gone.

The rite and the symbol of the New Covenant is baptism in which is pictured a death to the old ways as we are plunged into water; cleansing that comes from water and being raised up in newness of life.

If you are a believer, if you are a Christian, and you have not been baptized, you are an anomaly. You need to get baptized! You have something very joyful ahead of you. That is the initiatory rite of New Covenant faith in Jesus.

In Christ there is the end of all of the old dietary laws of the Old Testament. Now we are given the wonderful rite of the New Covenant in the Lord's Supper, consuming the bread which speaks to us of His body; consuming the cup, which speaks of His blood. In those elements, we find our new life, nourished by God's ongoing grace in our lives. Christ is the beginning, the firstborn from among the dead.

Now, why did Paul ascribe these sovereign titles to the Lord Jesus Christ? There is a great purpose statement that is found at the end of Verse 18

**<sup>18</sup>...He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.**



The term preeminent means that Jesus is the Supreme One who is to have first place; who is in full control; who has final authority in everything. He is the foremost and unrivaled reality of the lives and hearts of the people of God who are filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. He has preeminence. He is supreme. He is the One that we look to, knowing that the grace of God is embodied and manifested in Him. He is preeminent.

So bringing this to the practical, shoe-leather level experience of your daily walk in Christ, is He preeminent? Let me ask you this question: who do you go to first? When life is crazy and is spiraling out of control, who do you go to first. Who do you know is the One who is the strength of your life?

What is your first impulse? All of this is being revealed to you by God's grace so that you will look to Jesus first, because He is the preeminent, supreme, and all-sufficient One for all of the needs that you have that need to be held together. We go to Jesus first. He is the Lord.

Jesus has created many good things and Jesus uses means. There is a church full of people here and we are to support one another. When we get sick, yes, it is very good idea to go to the doctor. Jesus has given them wisdom. There are all kinds of resources all throughout this world that God has given by His common grace.

But let us understand that in the midst of the struggling times and in the midst of the good times, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus is the source of all things that uphold us and that sustains our souls. So in the midst of the trials, let this text lead you to the One who reigns supreme, who knows you inside and out. We go to Jesus first. This text has taken us there.

There were intruders coming into Colossae. Paul knew it and he knew how easily our hearts can stray after other things. The Colossians were talking about visions and the worships of angels, and all the other flashy ways to try and grow in the Lord and seek from God. Paul was saying, No! Get your eyes on Jesus and keep them on Jesus. Let Him be preeminent in all things.

When you are not freaking out, when you don't feel like your life is going unraveled and you feel like everything is going great, do you know what you need to do? Go to Jesus, because He is the One holding all things together.

The Word of God is leading us to the all-sufficient, gracious King that we might abide in Him all of our days. So pray that you can see Him clearly. Pray that you will have spiritual vision. Pray in the midst of the challenges of life.

Pray in the midst of it all; that by God's grace and by your obedience to the grace that is given to you, that you will abide in the One who is the King of kings, and the Lord of lords. The Lord of creation. The Lord of the New Creation. The Lord of our lives. Jesus is King.

Let's close in a word of prayer.