



“In Him and Through Him”

Colossians 1:19-20

December 19, 2021

I hope and trust this morning of music is adding joy and substance to your celebration of Christmas. It is so good to be immersed not just in the sounds of the season, but in the truths of this very high and holy holiday of Christmas. Thank you pastor David and to our choir.

As we take some time to give our attention to the Scriptures, I want to continue taking you to the very heart of the Christmas holiday. One song that we sang this morning is titled, “What Child is This?” That truly is the question of Christmas. Why is all of this attention given to this one baby born in an otherwise insignificant and forgotten village called Bethlehem?

This week I tried to find an estimation of how many people have ever lived on the face of the planet earth. Currently it is estimated that there are about 7.8 billion human beings. 7.8 billion people have passed through the birth canal of a woman. An organization that is called The Population Reference Bureau estimates that somewhere around 117 billion people have been born through the course of human history. That is a mind bending number for me.

This morning I come to you with this choir and the songs that they have been singing making it known that Jesus Christ is absolutely unique among all that have ever lived on the face of this earth. Jesus Christ is distinct. Jesus is in a class all of its own. There is no one like Jesus. There has never been anyone else like Jesus. There will never be another like Jesus Christ the Lord.

I want to let you know that He is not only worthy of your attention today, but He is worth of your devotion and your worship. This morning I pray that each of us will know how desperately we need Him. I pray that each one of us will know what a treasure it is to know Him and what an honor it is to be known by Him.

He is worthy of your trust and your faith as you try to navigate life in this broken world that we live in and even more, you must believe in Him as you look forward to the day when your body will surely die.

To answer the question “What Child is This?” I draw your attention this morning to a letter in the New Testament written by a First Century follower of the Lord Jesus Christ by the name of Paul. Jesus Himself commissioned Paul as an apostle, an official spokesman you might say. He was writing to a small church in a declining town ironically called Colossae—colossus! But it was a small town. A shrinking town.

However, it was a steady church and a strong church, but people were seeking to influence the people of that small church with falsehood. It does not seem that this false teaching outright denied Christ. Perhaps even worse, it was presenting Christ as an option among other ways of communing with the Living God—a spiritual option among options. Perhaps He was prominent, but Christ was not unique and preeminent.

They were saying that angelic messengers could also mediate and deepen your relationship with God. So in this way, it seems that people were seeking to influence this small church in such a way that Christ would be marginalized and somewhat minimalized. And Paul said, ‘Oh no!’ He heard about it from the pastor of the church who was one of his associates and Paul said, “They need to keep their eyes on Jesus and His unique, singular glory as Lord and Savior.

So we have what is before us in Colossians Chapter 1 and Verses 15 through 20, as Paul sets our eyes on the glory of Christ, helping us to see that Jesus is in a class all by Himself. These are staggering truths. Let me read them to you. Verse 15:

**<sup>15</sup>He**

That is Christ referred to as the beloved Son of God in Verse 13, just previous to this passage.

**<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.**

All God’s people said, Amen! This is Jesus.

We have been studying this paragraph for these past several weeks together here at Bethel Grace and we have learned that some of the Greek scholars looking at the sentence structure and the certain rhythm that is that paragraph, that Paul may very well have been incorporating an early hymn of the Christian faith, and it is so rich.

That may be the case. It may not be case. This last week I began trying to sing the verses we just read according to the melody that is linked to my favorite song, “Hark, the Heralded Angles Sing.” I want to let you know that it kind of worked. Go for it and give it a try, or pick your other favorite song.

But what I want for us to do is to just look at what is here and what Paul either quoted or composed, getting the attention on Jesus Christ. What we have here in this amazing portion of Scripture brings us into the over-arching drama of redemption that runs through the entire span of the history of the planet earth.

This portion of Scripture takes us to the dawn of time; to the creation of the world, and what we find is that it was the very Son of God, it was by Him, that all things were made. So that in Genesis Chapter 1 when we read those words, “In the beginning God said, let there be light and there was light, it was the voice of the Son of God commanding forth creation. This is Christ.

He is the Creator. By Him all things have created. All things have been created through Him and for Him. Christ the Second Person of the One Triune God, the Trinity.

What we find in the pages of Scripture is that at the very beginning God created this universe and this world, and it was all very good. But it did not take long before the first human beings sinned. We read that God issued forth a number of imperatives filled with instruction and purpose for Adam and Eve, the first human beings, and God gave one prohibition not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

This was a test of human responsiveness to the unique authority and sovereignty of the God who made it all and made us in His image. It did not take long for the first human beings with a nudge from Satan, the evil one, to break that command; to rebel against the Lord; to dismiss what He had commanded. And at that moment sin entered into the universe by way of these human beings, the human realm.

This holiday season, picture with me this universe as a giant snow globe. As the one's created in the image of God dismissed the command of God and took ownership for themselves, just imagine that globe being shattered; not utterly destroyed but shattered. Imagine corruption infecting it. That is in fact the case. That is what has happened. Sin has entered into the created realm and it infects everything.

This world is under a divine curse for sin but, brothers and sisters, I do want to let you know that this morning that I bring good news to you. The hymn that we are reflecting on here in Colossians Chapter 1, it is not a tragedy, it is in fact a hymn of triumph, is it not? Because into this created realm comes the Creator Himself. Christ Jesus entering into that which He has created to bring reconciliation with God.

In the knowledge of who He is, Christ is to be recognized as preeminent, not prominent but preeminent. When it comes to knowing God and when it comes to having eternal life and forgiveness of sin, it's Christ! It is Christ alone. There is no second option. There is no rival. There is nobody in second place, third place, twentieth place, hundredth place. There is nobody else! In the seen or unseen realm, it is all about Jesus and this text is given to us that we might view Him and worship Him as preeminent, as the Holy Spirit reveals these things to our hearts.

Now here in Colossians Chapter 1, this morning we give our attention to final stanza. We have been walking through this text for the last several weeks, and this morning I just want for us to focus our attention on Verses 19 and 20, where we are given two reasons why Christ must be viewed as the preeminent One; in a class all by Himself—the Savior of the world.

It's a matter of what dwells in Him and what happens through Him. As it turns out, what dwells in Him, this is the meaning of Christmas. What happens through Him? This is the purpose of Christmas. So let's take a second look at these sentences and pray that the Holy Spirit will be revealing Jesus to us.

If you are not a Christian, I pray that you will know Jesus and have trust and faith rising up within you today by the power of God that you may enter into Him. If you are here and you are a Christian, I pray that you will see how much you need Him in an ongoing way and how good and powerful He is, that your worship might be fanned into flame all the more.

Why is Christ to be worshipped as preeminent? There is the purpose, now why? Why worship Christ as preeminent? First:

### **1. For what dwells in Him (1:19)**

We read it in Verse 19:

**<sup>19</sup>For in him**

Jesus of Nazareth. A human being who walked on this earth.

**<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.**

In Christ the overflowing glory and substance and fullness of who God is was pleased to take up permanent residence in human flesh. God assumed human nature in Jesus Christ our Lord. This language of dwelling is temple language.

Earlier in Israel's history, Solomon erected a temple for God. It was to be a dwelling place where God's presence would meet with His people. But even when Solomon was dedicating the temple with prayer, he prayed in I Kings Chapter 8 and Verse 27:

**<sup>27</sup>But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built!**

Yet Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, and carried by Him said:

**<sup>19</sup>For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell**

Christ is preeminent and He is unique. There is no one like Jesus for in Christ, all of the pristine perfections of God dwell in bodily form. In Christ all of the attributes of God are there dwelling in a human being. In Christ all of the immeasurable power of God and all of the profound holiness of God are embodied in Jesus in full measure.

Christmas is this: Jesus is God incarnate. Jesus is the Eternal Creator, the All Mighty Omnipotent Lord of all in the world. As a baby. Then as a man. Then as a resurrected man. Then returned to the right hand of the Father, awaiting the time when He will return to this earth in power and glory. This is who Jesus is—God incarnate. Why is Jesus to be worshiped as preeminent? For what dwells in Him—the fullness of God.

Paul amplified this a little later in this letter. Getting into Chapter 2, Paul was helping the Colossians, saying, “Keep your eyes on Him. Be rooted and built up in Him alone and don’t be led astray by the empty philosophies of this world.” Why?

**<sup>9</sup>For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, <sup>10</sup>and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. (Colossians Chapter 2 and Verses 9 and 10)**

There is the sense in which the Spirit-filled Christian is filled with the fullness of God’s presence to the extent that a finite creature can be, but what is happening with Christ is utterly and totally unique. We are not God. We never will be God. Christ is God in human flesh.

**<sup>9</sup>For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily**

This is a spectacular reality that in Christ there is genuine humanity and undiminished deity, joined together. This is the meaning of Christmas.

It was the everlasting God in the womb of a virgin. It was the Lord of all creation in Bethlehem’s manger. It was the great I AM, the self-existent one wrapped in Mary’s swaddling clothes. It was in this way that in Christ God entered into that fractured, splintered snow globe that was ruined by sin—entering into a world of darkness and where, yes, there is glory to be seen all around us.

There are fingerprints of God everywhere but even in the midst of it all, there is heaviness and there is evil and there is wickedness and there is sorrow and there is anxiety and the One God of All came here among us. This is Christmas.

You will hear on different channels, “What is the true meaning of Christmas?” There is a very important theological word for the responses you will hear on T.V. to that question. That word is hogwash! There might be some good things. We want peace and we want to be generous, but Christ, God incarnate, that is the meaning of Christmas.

Why is Christ preeminent? Because of what dwells in Him. Why is He preeminent:

## **2. For What happens through Him (1:20)**

This is what also comes to us in this wonderful text.

**<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.**

Here we read that reconciliation happens through Jesus Christ, and according to what we have just read, this reconciliation is cosmic in its scope. It is awesome! Reconciliation is a positive experience that is defined by a second word that is used in this verse. That is the word *peace*. It is a word of harmony.

The Greek word is Eirene. It is a word that has to do with relational well-being. I'm pretty sure that the name Irene means peace! Maybe a little bit more familiar is the word Shalom. Maybe somebody will name their child Shalom. Irene means peace, why not Shalom? This is what reconciliation brings.

This being the case, understanding that reconciliation is a wonderful word and an even better experience, we must understand that there is something that requires reconciliation. The use of that word indicates that something is amiss; something has gone wrong, very seriously wrong requiring reconciliation and this, brothers and sisters, is what we have been talking about. This is sin. Sin has gone wrong.

Sin is any dismissal of the Living God and resistance to His will. This is sin. When we disregard the Lord of all and His commands and we say, I'm going to be my own authority. I'm going to be the lord of my own life, that is sin.

And all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of the God. The man who is talking to you is very, very prominently among all of those who have sinned. We have all sinned, and the wages of sin is death. BUT the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. What stands out in this passage is the great emphasis that is placed on the scope of God's redeeming pleasure in Christ.

Did you notice the word all and all things used repeatedly here in this passage of Scripture?

**<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.**

These are expressions of the profound mercy and kindness of God.

There is very interesting language here. Sinners like us are not the only beneficiaries of the redeeming grace of Christ as we enter into that grace and as we by grace enter into that relationship through faith, but all creation benefits from the reconciling work of God in Christ.

Keeping the globe illustration in your head, the whole earth went south. This picture here is amazing because it says, "whether on earth or in heaven." There is this reconciliation that is brought through Jesus Christ uniquely and singularly.

We are talking about the angelic realm and we are talking about the human realm. We are not talking about the demonic realm. In another one of Paul's prison epistles, he refers to the demonic as that which is under the earth. There is no indication anywhere in the Bible that a fallen angel, a demon, can be redeemed.

Yet this text says:

**<sup>20</sup>and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven**

What does that *in heaven* mean? Why would holy angels need to be reconciled? Isn't that an interesting question? These are claims that are made by the Apostle Paul. You will find among commentators all kinds of suggestions about just what it is that he might be saying.

But what I offer to you as I try to understand what "all things in heaven and earth" means, it is talking about that through Christ there is going to be this reconciliation where angels and forgiven sinners are both together brought close to the throne of the Living God.

Angels are mysterious servants of God in Scripture. We never pray to angels. We never need to contract angels. But they are there and they are awesome. They are powerful, and they are intent guardians of the holiness of God. They see everything that is happening in the human realm.

I wonder sometimes if there are angels watching my life, where they are saying, "Jeff, what are you doing? What are you thinking?!" They see this drama of human rebellion and their hearts are agitated. Perhaps what it is talking about here is that those redeemed by the blood of Christ in the human sphere and the angels who have been seeing it all, are all going to be brought together in eternal harmony, serving the Lord. If God has a heart of mercy, the angles follow suit. That may be something like what we are talking about here. This is awesome language that is given to here in this text.

This does not mean that every last created being will be saved and be brought into a condition of harmonious reconciliation with God. We cannot and we will not dismiss all of the solemn warnings of judgement for sin that are given throughout the pages of Scripture. Sin that is unrepented of and not forgiven by Christ will be eternal. Unrepentant sinners and demons will not enjoy the eternal peace and glory, but will face eternal judgment for their sin.

What we see in the verses that follow is that such reconciliation happens through faith in Christ. Reading through Verses 21 and 23, which we will give our attention to next week, what you find is that when a sinner like us comes to faith in Jesus we are reconciled with God. Faith is a matter of confessing, yes, I am a sinner in need..

It is a matter of agreeing, yes, my sin has fractured this relationship. It is a matter of agreeing, Jesus is the answer. Christ is the solution. Christ came into the world to save sinners and so, I am going to trust in Jesus. I am going to rest in Jesus. I am going to depend on Jesus. That is how reconciliation is transacted. This text is a mighty hymn of triumph, taking us to the pleasure of the heart of the graciousness of God to redeem a world of sinners like us.

This passage teaches us the high and holy cost through which reconciliation comes. The phrase, “the blood of His cross” is used only here in the pages of Scripture. In his writings, Paul has a lot to say about the blood of Christ. He has a lot to say about the cross of Christ, but here they are brought together in this phrase to speak of and to emphasize the power of the atonement of Jesus that He accomplished at the cross.

Christmas was a mission of peace and mercy. The incarnation was preparatory for the atonement. In Christ, the Triune God made Himself pierceable. In Christ, God made Himself bruisable. He made Himself into man so that He might redeem men and women who have sinned. Jesus is our Savior. This is the purpose of Christmas and He has made peace by the blood of His cross. It is by the grace of God as we trust in Him that we enter into that forgiveness that Jesus brings to His people.

Now the Colossians, they were being tempted to go to other sources of spiritual enlightenment. Paul was saying no, no, no. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. So in keeping with the tone of the point of what is here, don't go seeking answers from psychics or mediums. I have been noticing how those places are everywhere! No! God forbids that. Do not do that. It is dangerous.

Don't pray to a dead relative. They cannot hear you. Don't seek contact with spirit guides. Don't seek contact with angels. God is approached by one way; by one person; by the preeminent One. Go to Jesus! He is supreme. He is sufficient. He has a love and an understanding that is profound in its nature.

Jesus looks upon sinners like us with great mercy. He is drawn in with compassion as we suffer through sin. He forgives those who look to Him in faith. He is an ever-present reality in the lives of those who come to Him. We trust in Jesus.

Who is Jesus? Why is He preeminent? I will finish with this, then we will sing praises to the Lord.

**<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.**

Not only will the people of God who trust in Him be resurrected but that snow globe is going to be resurrected and restored. Some day with His coming, we are looking forward to living with Him forevermore in a pristine, pure, perfect joyful earth, where there will be singing and dancing and hugging and happy dances galore, with joy in serving the Lord without the hindrance of sin.

His Kingdom is going to come powerfully upon this earth. He brought the first installment with forgiveness of sins so that sinners can be cleansed, clothed in righteousness and made fit for such a holy Kingdom. And throughout all eternity those who are in Christ are going to live in eternal glory and happiness and joy forevermore. Joy to the world, the Lord has come! Praise God for who He is.

Let's pray.