

Jesus is Bigger Than We Think

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Date: 13 September 2020

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[0 : 00] for reading and thank you to the sound guys for desperately frantically being at the back fixing all the things for us. I'm Robbie, I'm one of the ministry trainees here and it's a joy to be gathering again. It's a month and I don't think I'm over it just yet. I always wonder what it must have been like to grow up with someone who is known as one of the greatest of all time.

What was it like to grow up as one of the Williams sisters friends? What was it like to know Michael Jordan when he was a boy and he's still your friend as you've grown up? Does it become normal when you go out for a pint with the world's fastest man? I imagine it probably does. You'll probably get used to it. It's Usain, you've known him since you were a kid. You've always known he was fast, he always won the races at school and but then I think you might easily forget just how fast he actually was.

You'd be used to the things he spoke about and said and one day you sit down, it's 2008, you're in front of your TV, you're in John the Olympics and you see Usain Bolt break the world record for the 100 meters and the 200 meters. He's the fastest man alive and zap, you've remembered just how fast that man is.

The normality is gone, you realize your friend is not just that normal guy anymore. He's the greatest of all time. I think we often can do that with Jesus. Often when we know him we over-normalize him. We're used to him. Some of us have spent our entire lives knowing him, learning about him and it's easy to put him into the box we have, the Jesus-sized box in our head and we leave him there.

[1 : 36] But what Paul is doing in our passage tonight as we continue to look at Colossians is he is giving us that shock to realize Jesus is so much bigger than we think.

He's so much more bigger than the box we put him in. He's so much bigger than we give him credit for. Let me pray before we dig right into Colossians. Father, thank you for your son. Thank you that despite what we think of him, he is just enormous, Lord. He's done so much. I pray you'd open our eyes to what your word has to tell us tonight, that you might speak into all of our hearts and comfort us with the truth that Jesus is over everything in creation. In your holy name, Lord. Amen.

So, we're at the end of the opening section of this letter to the Colossians. And Paul jumps in as he's about to start the body main with this wonderful passage talking about Jesus.

This passage builds on the reminders he's been giving the Colossians so far. And today's verses that we're studying are a final reminder of who Jesus is and what he's done for the Colossians. And it is just heartwarming, isn't it? You can't read these verses without just kind of being overwhelmed by this scale of Jesus. But we need to just remember that this isn't just some nice verses about Jesus. Paul's written this for a reason.

[3 : 01] This section serves as a foundation which Paul uses throughout the rest of this letter. We see the threads that Paul introduces in these verses as he weaves them through the rest of this letter to deal with all the main things he's writing to them about.

Most importantly, this section is all about Jesus. As we continue through, keep an eye out for what Paul repeats. Again and again, he talks of Jesus. He is. He is. He is. He is. He is this. He is this. He is this.

Jesus. So as we go through tonight, let's find out more about Jesus together. And the first thing that Paul wants us to realize is Christ reigns over all creation.

Which is kind of verses 15 to 18 in the passage. He's writing to a church he's never met. But Epaphras has come and told Paul all about him. So he knows everything that's going on there. And that's prompted Paul to write to them. To help them, encourage them, and guide them away from any potential dangers they might be falling into. And whatever these dangers are, Paul opens the letter wanting to give them the right foundation to face them.

[4 : 09] And that foundation Paul sets is the confident knowledge of who Jesus is and what he has done. Verses 15 to 19 of this section are a nice little poem.

We think it might be an early hymn from the early church that just sings praises to Jesus. And in it, I think Paul highlights four things about who Jesus is. So we're going to work through them one by one quickly.

First of all, verse 15. The sun is the image of the invisible gods. Jesus Christ is the exact representation of gods.

Now don't be confused. This doesn't mean he's like a picture of me or he's close to God. He's not a caricature. We don't see a good copy of God when we look at Jesus. No, when we look at Jesus, we are looking at God himself.

No longer is God invisible to us. Jesus is the physical manifestation of God. But whenever we want to learn about who God is, how he would treat people, what he thinks, we can look to Jesus.

[5 : 16] Often one of the biggest things people say, non-believers might say about this is, if God is real, why hasn't he revealed himself? The thing that Colossians tells us is he has.

It may not have been in a great cloud of fire like they expect, but it was in a person. It was in Jesus Christ. And if we want people to know who God is, we can show them Jesus.

And if they want to come and say, you know, I don't think he has, we can say, well, let's sit down.

Let's look at who Jesus is, what he said, what he's done. That's how you get to know God. So that's our first thing. Secondly, we learn that all things were made through Christ and for Christ.

Let me read verse 16. These verses are breathtaking.

Everything that has been, is, or ever will be was created through Christ. It's so easy to just think of Jesus in what he did when he came to earth in his life and through his death.

[6 : 34] And those are such important things. But before he came to earth, he was crucially involved in the creation itself. Not just some things, but all things.

Skim through this passage. What do we see Paul repeating? That phrase, all things. It comes up eight times in these five verses. Paul really wants us to understand.

All things were made by Christ and for Christ. And again, just to see the scale of these claims.

It's not just the things that we can see. It's not just the things around us in the world. Even the things we can't see. Even all of the heavenly realms. All the spirits and angels were created through Christ.

All of the people in power. All of the governments and rulers. They were all created through Christ. It's mind-blowing. But it doesn't stop there.

[7 : 37] He's not just a creator God. But he doesn't just create them through Christ. But for him. So it's possible that the Colossians. When Paul was writing to them.

Were having issues with some of these things on the list. Maybe they were having troubles with people convincing that pagan gods were the way to go. Maybe they were having troubles with other spiritual beings.

Or maybe it was that there was issues with the local rulers. They could have been worried about any number of things. But Paul wants the church in Colossae to know. Whatever it is you're struggling with.

Everything was created through Christ and for Christ. The Jesus that they know and have heard about. Everything was made for him.

Now thirdly in verse 18. We see that Jesus is the head of the body. The church of Christ. Christ is the controlling aspect of the church. He's the one with the greatest authority over the people of God.

[8 : 38] Now the church is described as a body. We are united through Christ. Have you ever done anything with your body that your head didn't want to do? It's quite hard.

And that's how we should interact as the church. We should be following Christ's words to the letter exactly as he wants us. And even if we somehow did manage to separate ourselves. It's going to go badly.

I've never met a body without a head. He alone. Jesus Christ alone has authority over his people, the church. And he leads us.

And our final of four things is that we see Jesus as firstborn over all creation and firstborn from among the dead. These are in verses 15 and 18. These lines are the first lines of our two sections to the poem.

If you go through it, they're kind of, they're in the same structure. And Paul opens with these firstborn things. So they're clearly important. So what does it mean that Jesus is the firstborn? [9 : 38] Well, I think the easiest way to describe it might be to think of something like Game of Thrones. Or the medieval kings that you love to watch. The firstborn child was the one with all of the rights to the kingdom.

They were the king in waiting. In saying that Jesus is the firstborn over all creation, Paul is telling us that Jesus is the rightful king over all creation.

All creation was made through him. And he was made the rightful ruler over all of it. Now, being firstborn from among the dead is closely tied to his place as head of the church.

He's the beginning of the church too. And it was in the resurrection that these things began. It's in the resurrection that he took his place as firstborn from among the dead.

It was there when the church was created. When he rose again, he showed his authority over the dead. And in rising again, Jesus can now give true eternal life to those who believe in him.

[10 : 37] Jesus is able to bring those who are dead to their sins back to life. Because of that, he's the rightful ruler of all those who have that new life.

All those who rise from the dead. He is the king of. His authority does not end when our lives do. Or when this world ends. For he's the firstborn of the living and the dead.

And he's waiting to rule forever. So Paul uses these four points, these four things about Jesus to make one point. Jesus, God incarnate, is the rightful ruler over everything.

Both the living and the dead. There is nothing, absolutely nothing, that Christ does not have authority and power over. As verse 18 tells us, in everything, he has the supremacy.

When our feelings start to overwhelm us. When things around us in the world look like they're getting too much for us to handle. We need to stop.

[11 : 40] We need to take that box we fit Jesus into and throw it away. And look at the Christ Paul is telling us about. See the true Jesus. The ruler over all creation.

This Jesus. Whom through all creation was made and for whom it was made. Is the same Jesus we read about in Matthew 11, 28. He calls all who are weary and burdened.

The reason we can find true rest in him. Is because he is bigger than anything that is going to face us. So, the first half of this little poem showed us that Christ is ruler over all creation.

Paul wants us and he wants the Colossians to know more than that. Paul wants us to see what Jesus is doing now. So, the second half of this little section, verses 18 to 20, show us that Christ is restoring all creation.

The key word in this little section is reconcile. Jesus is reconciling all things to himself. But what does that mean? Well, the fact that something needs reconciled, that tells us something in itself.

[12 : 54] Something's gone wrong. All these things were created through Christ. But creation has become twisted and broken. Sin came in the world.

The creation is not what it was meant to be. But in this section, we see that Christ is moving to make these things right. It's ensuring that all creation is brought back to God.

So, these verses show us that the world needs reconciliation. But it also shows us how that happens. Verse 20 says, verse 20 tells us it was through the cross. Through his blood.

Well, Paul says through his blood. He means both through his death. The physical pouring out of his blood. But it was also the price paid by that blood. A sacrifice was required to reconcile everything.

And that was Jesus' blood. Jesus' blood was enough. It was sufficient for all creation to be reconciled to God.

[13 : 58] That might lead to the question, if Jesus' blood was enough and everything was reconciled at the cross, why are things not good yet? Why are things still hard? Why is the world still not what it was meant to be?

Colossians isn't concerned with the when. It is telling us what happened. What Jesus has done. But it does tell us that reconciliation has happened at the cross.

We can turn to Romans 8, which does tell us that we're going to have to wait for this to come and be visible. We will see the full force of this happen when Christ returns again. Romans 8 assures us of that.

This whole section gives us the scope we need when we think about the cross. Often we talk about Jesus, about his death, as a personal thing to ourselves.

It's about my salvation and what Jesus has done for me. That is very important. But if we only think of ourselves, we are missing the bigger picture. In verse 19, in sending Christ to earth, God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things.

[15:06] It's that little phrase again, all things. Look at the scale of what Jesus did on the cross. I'm actually not confident any of us can fully process that truth.

We just can't get our heads around all things. We can't get our head around the truth of that all things are broken. Never mind that Jesus fixed all things. There is nothing that has ever existed, that ever will exist, that cannot be reconciled by Christ's work.

Christ is king. He's the rightful king over all the creation. But he also came to bring all of that creation back to God. There was tension. There was conflict between the creation and God because of sin.

Yet when Christ came, he made peace through the cross. This is the big picture of what Jesus is still doing today. The cross isn't just about Jesus and me.

It's not just a personal thing. What the cross is about is Jesus and the entire cosmos. The entire universe is being reconciled to God.

[16:12] How easy it is for us to come to church or come to God in prayer, worrying about the things that affect our lives, the little things that are going on in our own spheres. They can seem so big.

But when we realize that God is working on something so monumentally massive as reconciling the entire universe, it puts the things in our lives into a bit of perspective.

It's like when you have a leaking roof. It's been raining nonstop. We're in Glasgow, of course. And there's a leak that started into your flat or your home. And it's all you can think about that evening.

It's just frustrating. You don't know how to fix it.

You go to bed and the only thing you can think of is that drip, drip, drip. And it's just the most pressing thing in your life. You can't sleep because you're worried that the downstairs is flooding.

And you somehow drift off and you wake up and you go downstairs and it's still dripping in the corner. You turn on the TV and you see the news. There's been some huge natural disaster at the other side of the world.

[17:12] Tens of thousands of people have lost their home. All of a sudden, your leak doesn't seem so important anymore. It doesn't remove the leak. Having that perspective doesn't change the problem you have.

But it gives you a bit of understanding as to what else is going on. This is what the true scale of the gospel does to the problems we face.

They become a bit more manageable when we realize that God is correcting the entire universe.

The horrible effects of sin are being righted. I'm not saying God doesn't care about your problems or we should just put up and shut up with the wrongs of the world that are happening to us.

Of course not. But when we see the big problem God is fixing, that he did fix on the cross, the small things in our life become a bit more local news rather than the global news that takes over the whole world.

So we've seen that Christ is supreme over all creation. And we've seen that Christ is reconciling all of creation to himself.

[18:23] Then in verses 21 to 23, Paul pivots. He pivots into the personal implications of this truth. So we've seen that all of creation is reconciled, but what does that mean for the Colossians?

In these verses, Paul lays out plain. He lays out the hope of the gospel. The gospel they have heard. The one they already know. Paul's told them that already in this letter.

And that gospel that they've heard and know is this. In verses 21 to 22. The Colossians were alienated from God and were enemies in their minds because of their evil behavior.

But now they've been reconciled by Christ's physical body through death to present them wholly in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation. That is the gospel they know and have heard.

Through the power of Jesus' reconciling death, they are presented wholly when once they were evil. They were free from accusation when once they were enemies.

[19:25] They were once alienated from God, but have now finally been reconciled through Jesus. There's a really beautiful picture here that Jesus is presenting the Colossian church.

He's holding them up before God and saying, look, look at these people. They are holy. They are without blemish. There is nothing wrong with them, and God accepts them.

But there's a bit of bite here. The Colossians were probably in awe of that truth as they hear it. They realize that is unbelievable, that through what Christ has done, we can be seen as perfect.

But Paul adds the edge. This presentation, Jesus holding us up, holding the Colossians up before God, it will happen if you continue in your faith.

If you do not move from the hope of the gospel, that hope is the work that Jesus has done. This great work, the skill of which we cannot fully comprehend, we have to stick to that.

[20 : 29] Colossae was at threat from teachers coming in. They were trying to lead them astray. It was subtle, of course. The Colossians didn't realize, or think they were turning around and walking away, but the road they were going down was probably going to lead that way.

The teachers were encouraging them to hold on to other things alongside the belief in Jesus. But that doesn't work. Think about this Jesus we've been talking about.

We've been reading about. The Jesus who is king of all creation. The Jesus who can reconcile the entirety of creation. What else could you ever need?

What can we think to add to that? What can that Jesus not give us? Verses 15 to 23, Paul is setting the groundwork of how massive Jesus is and how huge his work is so he can go on to remind them that they need nothing else.

Verse 23 says, If you do stray, you lose everything. If you move even slightly from the gospel, you don't have anything.

[21 : 38] This massive Jesus is 100% of what we need. If we have 50% Jesus and 50% something else, say it's our own works, you know, it's the way we act, that you help the people across the road and all these ways you volunteer.

50% Jesus, 50% our works. You have nothing. You can't get a 50-50 salvation. Even if, you know what, actually, well, I know it's not 50% me.

I know it's not 50% this thing. But it's a little bit that thing. You know, in fact, it's probably 99% that Jesus and 1% me. That's a lot of Jesus.

But in that thinking, you're assuming that that extra thing you have is worth more than the Jesus who is king over all creation. With a Jesus this big, with a Jesus whose work covers this much, there's nothing else we could ever need.

is a difficult problem for us to identify in our personal lives. Is there anything we do that actually may be subtly leading us away from that wholeness in Christ, that 100% way he reconciled us?

[22 : 52] When we get further into the letter of Colossians over the next few weeks, we're going to see the extras that Paul is trying to steer the Colossians away from. And we'll think then when we get to those passages, actually, how does that affect me?

How does that affect us today? In St. Silas. But I think this great song we have, this early hymn, gives us one way to ensure we are always fighting whatever comes up.

And that is that we focus entirely on the beauty of Christ. The Jesus that Colossians 1, verses 15 to 23, talks of, he is enormous.

Are we acting like Usain Bolt's old friends? Are we still seeing Jesus in this overly familiar light?

Hopefully these verses that Paul has given us are the shock we need to open our eyes to the true scale of the King of all creation, Jesus Christ.

His authority will last forever because he is first born from the living and the dead. His death on the cross, that act of reconciliation through his blood is sufficient for the entire universe.

[24 : 04] And it is all we need. That same death is enough for us. We must continue solely in that. So as we leave, after we've had communion today, maybe we're reeling from that shock, that realization, but hopefully you're going to be singing or maybe humming the praises of our wonderful Savior King.

He is so much bigger than we know. Let me pray to close. Father, thank you for your words and for the realization that Jesus is sufficient for all creation.

Thank you that we can trust he will reign forever as the rightful king over all creation. Help us remember this shock and don't let us fall back into old habits of seeing him as near us.

He's the rightful heir to all things. Lord, give us discernment and wisdom to see where we may be trying to add to the work of Christ. And where we see that, give us extra love for Jesus.

Give us people around us to open our eyes to these things we have and to lovingly walk with us as we strive to be more like Christ. In your holy name, Lord. Amen.