

Colossians 1:15-20 Sermon: **Jesus is Good News**

Introduction:

I am one of those people who is often up late thinking. It is not that I am always thinking about profound things sometimes I am simply pondering the universe of Spiderman or thinking about how Yoda could have defeated Darth Sidious. I often think about life and how it is playing out. I often ponder on theological issues such as the sovereignty of God and I wonder what is going on in our world. With the onset of a new year I can't help but think a little about the future asking questions like, "What will life be like in 5 years, 10 years, or 50 years? How will the world change? How will America change? What kind of joys will I experience? What kind of sorrows? How does my faith play out in all of this? How do I think about the future in light of the Gospel and in light of the magnitude of God. And usually the more serious of these questions drive me to prayer and reading from scripture in search of some perspective.

As we enter a new year it is not uncommon to find people looking for perspective. You find people contemplating the past year and wondering about the year to come. Today we are going to look at a passage dripping with perspective. It is perspective that will shape how we think about and how we approach our world.

Please turn with me to Colossians chapter 1 vs 15-20.

Context:

As we do so we let us remember that it seems as if Paul writes this letter to defend the Gospel by celebrating and proclaiming the gospel joyously and with great spectacle. Paul does not hold back, in the early verses he explains how the Gospel has been growing all over the world, he explains that the Gospel was about redemption and that those who in faith receive the Gospel are heirs of the kingdom and they are free of this world and its trappings. He calls them to live in light of the Gospel to live righteous lives. You see the Colossians were being challenged in their perspective and Paul writes to keep them oriented in the right direction by giving them Perspective from Jesus who is good news. **Listen to the words of Colossians 1:15-**

- 15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.
- 16 For ¹by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.
- 17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.
- 18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.
- 19 For it was the *Father's* good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him,
- 20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, *I say*, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

Friends Jesus is Good News

He is Good News for all creation and for salvation.

❖ 1st Jesus is good news for all of creation.

Vs 15 ¹He is the ^aimage of the ^binvisible God,

Right off the start this passage declares something most magnificent, Jesus is the image – Jesus is the representation of the invisible God. The text very boldly unites the son to the father, leaving no doubt that in Jesus we saw God. Where once God had only been seen and known in clouds and voices and shadows he is now known in the person of Jesus the Christ. This is phenomenal. **Here is the perspective** - God is not distant, he is not impersonal but rather he is Immanuel, with us. Not as some cosmic force or essence but as a person, whom we can know. One whom we can relate with, the father has shown himself through his son! This is phenomenal; in Jesus we can know God. Ponder that for a moment. God has in his great mercy come to us to be known through his son Jesus.

¹ Or *in*

¹ Lit *Who is*

^a 2 Cor 4:4

^b John 1:1

Vs 15 now goes on to say even more, He is “the firstborn of all creation” Like in a Hebrew family the firstborn position was one of honor and authority. God spoke of David this way in Psalm 89:27. To say that Jesus is the firstborn of creation is to say that Jesus holds a position of honor and authority over creation. And Vs 16 quickly moves to tell us why Jesus receives this honor and authority,

16 For ^{1a}by Him all things were created,

Jesus is firstborn of all creation because he called all things into being, all things. There is nothing that was created that he did not make! And to leave no doubt the text gives clarity by saying both the things in heaven and the things in earth, and again so that no one misses the point, both the visible and the invisible. This passage is declaring firmly and boldly that Jesus was the one who created all things both the visible and the invisible, the physical and the spiritual. Everything.

The end of Vs 16 brings the perspective into a sharp focus with a stroke of application by saying “whether ^bthrones or dominions or rulers or authorities”. It is likely that the text here is referring to angelic beings in all four of these categories giving a sort of list of lower to higher beings. The point is that there was no spirit or power or being that would be able to overpower or dominate or take control or be stronger than the LORD Jesus who is the Christ. **Jesus Christ is supreme over all.** There are no powers which do not and will not bow to him. There is no power whether on earth or in heaven, whether visible or invisible who will rule over Jesus. Whether a Christian lives in a free country or not they are free to worship and serve Jesus because he is Lord, he is supreme. There is no created power who will tell Jesus what to do.

Vs 16 concludes that all of creation is not only made through him but for him. All of creation finds its purpose in Jesus Christ. There is nothing created that exists unto itself for itself. There is no unequal duality in the created universe both visible and invisible find its purpose in him. Here the walls come down, there is no sacred and secular. Everything is for Jesus, everything. And though some things are set apart for special purpose those things are not

¹ Or in

^a Eph 1:10

^b Eph 1:20f; Col 2:15

somehow inherently more righteous. All things find their end, their purpose, their goal in Jesus. Jesus has made both the physical and the spiritual that they may worship and serve him.

This means that when we mow our lawns, shovel our drives, get our mail, sleep, eat, change our clothes, pay our bills, gather to worship, preach, teach and listen to the gospel we do them for Christ as it was all created for him. Paul keeps this perspective when later in this very letter he says in 3:17 “Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father” and in 3:24-25 “Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord ²rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.”

It is a beautiful thing to know that when we go about our daily grind we are not simply bidding our time, but we are serving the Lord. With Jesus we are able to worship and serve Him all day everyday amidst all that we do. Whether we are consciously thinking about him or singing to Him or not, when we do the work that he has put before us whether that be helping patients, balancing budgets, cleaning toilets, writing papers, serving clients, changing diapers, teaching students, bagging groceries, all of it is for Jesus and is done in service to him. All is created by Jesus and for Jesus and there is no created one greater than him.

Vs 17 then like a good overture or poem returns to a previous theme to again celebrate that Jesus was not created but he was indeed before all things. And it adds to this theme by stating that not only was Jesus before all things and not only did he create all things but as the second half of vs 17 says “in Him all things ²hold together”. Literally, he keeps things from going poof. Jesus holds it all together and keeps it from spiraling into nothingness or cosmic chaos. Not in an Atlas kind of way by holding the globe still in space or carrying it on his back, but rather as Lord. Jesus prevails over the powers of darkness that would just as soon spin this world into utter chaos and destruction. Jesus keeps evil from overtaking the world and Jesus prevails in bringing His kingdom and His redemption.

This perspective is ultimately reassuring in a world that seems as if it is often on the brink of chaos and destruction. Jesus holds it together, he is the one who oversees events and history

² Lit *and not*

² Or *endure*

and gives rain to the just and the unjust. The forces of darkness have no power either over him or his world. Though they meddle with it, Jesus sustains and holds this world together guiding it ever toward him and his salvation. This perspective alleviates us from falling into futility, it helps us to not become overwhelmed by the world and its craziness. We need not worry, we need not fret, we need not try to consume and control. Listen to Jesus words from the book of John, “16:33 These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.” **Friends Jesus is Good News for all of creation!**

❖ **2nd Jesus is Good News for salvation.**

Vs. 18 now ties the two themes of creation and salvation together when it says “He is also ^ahead of ^bthe body, the church;” Here the text moves from first creation to the new creation, the work of redemption by Jesus. Here the text affirms that all things have been created by and for Christ even the Church of which he is the head, when it says, “He is also” it links the two together. Here is the perspective - all that was said about creation is also true about the Church. The Church, his body exists by him for him and he holds it together! We as his body, his church do not exist unto ourselves for our own purposes but for his purpose, for his will and for his glory. This means that we can be comforted in knowing that he is guiding and leading and that he is caring for us. This also means that we seek him and his purposes and his will for ourselves by obeying his Word and by following his Spirit.

And to elaborate on Jesus as Good News for Salvation the text declares next that,

He is ^cthe beginning, ^dthe firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

^a Eph 1:22

^b Eph 1:23; Col 1:24; 2:19

^c Rev 3:14

^d Acts 26:23

Salvation starts with Jesus, he created it he began it, he is the firstborn of the dead leading the way. Jesus is the first to rise from the dead, he has begun the work of salvation. The Gospel of Mark says it like this: “The time has come, the kingdom is near repent and believe.”

Jesus is now exalted even higher at the end of vs 18 which says “so that” or we could say “for this reason” “He Himself will come to have first place in everything”

Ever since the digital age and the onset of email, instant messaging and texting the fashion in which words are typed and set in their text or put on screen has become yet again very important, just as it was with the onset of the printing press. For instance if you were going to say hello to someone through instant messaging and you simply typed in lower case h e l l o, you would in effect be saying, hi. If however you were to type in H E L L O, you would be increasing your volume and in effect be saying, HEY THERE, WHAT’S UP BUDY. This verse which says, “so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything” you could say is in all caps. JESUS IS SUPREME IN EVERYTHING. Jesus is supreme in creation he is supreme in salvation. JESUS IS SUPREME IN EVERYTHING.

19 For ¹it was ^athe *Father's* good pleasure for all ^bthe ²fullness to dwell in Him,
20 and through Him to ^areconcile all things to Himself,
having made ^bpeace through ^cthe blood of His cross;
through Him, *I say*,
^dwhether things on earth or things in ¹heaven. ¹

Now in the last two verses what we find is some insight into the mind and heart of God as he carried out his plans for salvation through Jesus. Vs 19 says “For it was the *Father's* good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him,” We are reminded of similar times with the father was pleased with his son, at his baptism and at his transfiguration . Here the Father is pleased to have al l the fullness to dwell in Jesus. The Father is pleased to have all of him, his wisdom,

¹ Or *all the fullness was pleased to dwell*

^a Eph 1:5

^b John 1:16

² I.e. fullness of deity

^a 2 Cor 5:18; Eph 2:16

^b Rom 5:1; Eph 2:14

^c Eph 2:13

^d Col 1:16

¹ Lit *the heavens*

¹ *New American Standard Bible : 1995 update*. 1995 (Col 1:15-20). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

grace, mercy, truth, and righteousness be living within his Son Jesus the Christ. The Father is pleased for Christ to receive all the honor and authority over creation and salvation. “He is the image of the invisible God.”

The father was also pleased “through him” as vs 20 states “to reconcile all things to Himself” The father is pleased to bring all things back to himself through, by means of his son. Why? Because or “Since he has made peace through his blood on the cross, His cross.” The atonement of Jesus, his act of love and sacrifice brought peace. Hostility between God and man has been ended in Christ. Jesus has brought peace for those who believe. It is through Jesus in whom all of glory and authority and mercy, and grace and truth, and righteousness dwelled vs 20 concludes through Him all things are reconciled to the father, whether things on earth or things in heaven!

Here is the perspective - Jesus who created all things is redeeming all things, that is there is no area of creation which he did not create and which is left untouched by his work of redemption. The physical is being redeemed along with the spiritual. God’s salvation in Christ excludes nothing. Relationships, sex, work, industry, worship, leadership, authority, prayer, community... It is not just the spiritual which is being redeemed but the physical as well. The Gospel leaves no stone unturned, all of creation is being reconciled unto God through Jesus who has made peace through his blood on the cross His Cross. Paul reminds us in Romans 8:19-21 that creation is eagerly waiting for its liberation at the redemption of the children of God.” The Gospel is not just a ticket out of this world but rather it is a reorientation, a new life, a new beginning, a new creation in which every area of creation is being reconciled.

Friends Jesus is Good News for Salvation!

Let us celebrate the majesty and the supremacy of Jesus the Christ for

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

16 For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.

17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

19 For it was the *Father's* good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him,

20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, *I say*, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

May we rejoice in Jesus our good news and experience God in all of life this new year!

Let us pray...