

New Now

2. Jesus Above All

January 15, 2023

Good morning! My name is Christy, I'm one of the pastors on staff and I'm so glad you are worshipping with us! Welcome to our series, "New Now." It's a great series for the beginning of a new year. Within this series, we are talking about the life we can have as described in the book of Colossians. The rich, spiritual life that God wants us to have isn't far away, it's available to us even now!

Mark Twain wrote a famous story called "The Prince and The Pauper." In this tale, the prince invites the pauper into the palace and they trade clothes for fun. The prince believes he's bottled up and wants to get out and see the world, and the pauper gladly changes clothes because he is trying to escape the cruel world that the prince can't wait to see! The next thing that happens is a case of mistaken identity!

The prince is believed to be the beggar and is thrown out on the street while the pauper is treated like royalty. Both characters are surprised at this mistake. The prince didn't know he was playing with fire when he was just goofing off and having a little fun putting on someone else's clothes. He had no idea when he gave up his royal identity for a moment of fun that he would give away all his privilege and power that came with being the son of the King.

The people addressed in the book of Colossians were facing the same circumstances. They were under pressure to give up their identity in Christ and fall prey to false gods and religious laws. A couple thousand years later, we face the same pressures!

Colossians was a letter written to the church of Colosse by the apostle Paul. This church wasn't started by Paul but planted by a guy named Epaphras. Epaphras is giving a report to Paul about the state of the church and how great it's going, but also how much pressure the people there are under to follow the Jewish laws in order to be perfect and the influence of culture to follow many other gods.

Paul's letter brings encouragement to the people letting them know there is freedom from this pressure. Follow along with me, in your bible app or on the screen
Colossians 1:15-23:

¹⁵ The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers 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 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. ¹⁹ For God was pleased to

have all his fullness dwell in him,²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

²¹ Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of^a your evil behavior. ²² But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation— ²³ if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

Here are these people in a thriving church in Colosse. They are sold out followers of Jesus, yet they face pressures to turn to other gods and include Jesus as a god, rather than The God!

Paul was explaining the supremacy of Christ through this portion of scripture. In their culture, there were many gods to be followed, but Paul explained, **Jesus is supreme!**

The old saying, “a lot has changed, and nothing has changed” really applies here. In a recent study 38% of people who identified as evangelical Christians surveyed stated they believed Jesus was a good and moral teacher, but not God.¹

He is described in **verse 15** as “*the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all of creation.*” In other words, if you have seen Jesus, you have seen God.

An ancient creed we declare on occasion here at Crossroads is the Nicene Creed. And when we declare it, we say, “We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made.”²

Begotten, not made means **Jesus is the very substance of God!** He was not made by God; He always was with God from the very beginning! If you have seen Jesus; you have seen God!

John 1:1-5 tells us, “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* ² *He was with God in the beginning.* ³ *Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.* ⁴ *In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.* ⁵ *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*”

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² *The United Methodist Hymnal*, The United Methodist Publishing House. 1989 (p.818)

The Word is Jesus, with God in the beginning, through Him all things were and are made. All things were created through Jesus and for Jesus. God the Father puts Jesus in a place of honor. Everything is created through Him and for Him. Including us! We are created for His glory. We are “Image bearers.” Every one of us reflects Him. Every person has value because we are for His glory. Every person. Beauty and value are in each person because we are image bearers. Male, female, rich, poor, homeless, refugee, every shape, every size, every color, highly valued, highly prized, created through Him and for Him.

Not only did God make things we can see...He made all that is unseen. There is an earthly and spiritual world all put together by Him.

One of the temptations or pressures that the people of Colosse faced was the false teaching that they needed to worship angelic beings in order to appease them. But Paul draws this fascinating parallel line with the rulers of this world and the rulers of the unseen world.

Paul reminds us not to give undue attention to angels or demons or to rulers, or kings! In other words, they just aren't that special! Nothing is higher than Christ! Nothing deserves our attention and devotion more than Jesus!

¹⁶ For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.

Jesus is supreme above all, and everything must bow to Him! There are spiritual and earthly authorities and the commonality of both is that they are subject to Christ. Angels, demons, governments, presidents, rulers, kings....all ruling powers must get low before King Jesus...because nothing is higher!

And because nothing is Higher than King Jesus; He receives our worship! **Jesus is worthy of our worship and is able to receive our worship.** You and I are free to worship Him!

We are worshippers here at Crossroads. Worshipping isn't reserved for a select few who are on the platform; worshipping is what we do together as the Church. We offer our hearts, minds, bodies, and words of song and praise to Jesus because He is above all.

You do not have to worship in a certain way here at Crossroads in order to offer your worship to Jesus. Worship is a posture of the heart. Inclining our hearts toward Him. Some people raise their hands and are expressive; some people are more reserved and reflective. We worship together appreciating a variety of styles and posture: standing, sitting, kneeling, inclining our hearts and minds and songs toward King Jesus! Our worship is good and pleasing to Him.

Our corporate worship is important. I believe as we gather together, we will see people healed in worship, people set free from addictions as the Spirit of God moves in our services. Worship is a mark of the Church honoring King Jesus. It is an important corporate response in our Life Groups during the week and our weekend services. As we grow in worship in our corporate settings of the weekend services and our groups, worship becomes our lifestyle. We live a life that offers Him glory.

Worship is an appropriate response for the One who holds all things together! **Verse 17** declares, *"He is before all things, and in him all things hold together."* For this I am most thankful. When everything seems shaky and out of place; **I trust that Jesus is holding it all together.**

I know that Jesus is holding it all together even when it seems like everything has fallen apart. In loss, in disappointments, in betrayal, in sorrow, in grief, in hardships, Jesus holds all things together. He is not One who will forget you. He will not overlook you. He will not abandon you. He is for you and holding all things together.

He is with you. Whatever it is that you face today, you can trust Him. He holds it all together. I know at times my thinking is flawed; but He holds all wisdom and is holding it all together. I trust Him way more than I trust myself because time and time and time again, when my world falls apart, he's holding it together.

He did not leave His place in heaven to abandon you now. He calls us to be His disciples and to be disciple-makers. As a disciple, we get to walk with Him and learn from Him and be like Him.

When He was here in the flesh walking the earth He said to His disciples, **Matthew 28:18-20**, *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

Surely, I am with you always. He is supreme over all things and gives us authority to go. He makes us this promise...surely, I am with you always. In the good, in the bad, in the hard, in the ugly...surely, He is with you always...holding all things together.

We want to help you experience Jesus holding all things together in your life. An important equipping tool we offer began today, called *Following Jesus*. It's not too late for you to jump in. In this equipping, we help you become a practitioner of your faith. As a practitioner, you will learn to live in the rhythms of Jesus by praying, reading your bible, learning to share your story. At the end of this equipping experience, you are invited to join our movement by becoming a member at Crossroads Church. You can get details or sign up on our website (xr.chruch/fj) and someone will reach out to you this week to get you connected for next week.

We want to show you how to be a disciple of Jesus. The definition of a disciple is one who loves and obeys Jesus. **Disciple=One who Loves and Obeys Jesus**

We are able to love and obey Jesus by making Him Lord. Jesus isn't something to be learned about or included in our lives. He is to be in His rightful position as Leader and Lord, but Jesus does not assume this position. We place ourselves under His authority by allowing Him to lead us.

Jesus has a special position within the Church. He is the head. The head is the leader. All of us together are loving and obeying Him, and reflecting His goodness and grace to those who do not yet know Him.

Colossians 1:19-20 tells us, *God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

The perspective of heaven unfolds in these verses. God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him, meaning not the attributes of God, but all fullness. God Himself. Jesus Incarnate. God among people. God with us!

And He does this to make peace with us! The earthly perspective is to make peace through blood shed of people. The perspective of heaven is to make peace through the blood shed of God.

Over 2000 years ago there were 2 Kings making peace: King Caesar and King Jesus. King Caesar makes peace through the crucifying **of** rebels, one by one. King Jesus achieves peace by being crucified **for** rebels, once and for all. King Caesar makes examples of rebels. King Jesus becomes the example for rebels. Caesar forces rebels to submit through the threat of violence. Jesus invites rebels to submit through His great love.

Rebel hearts like yours and mine are pursued and redeemed by His work on the cross, offering peace to you and I who were His enemy. We were lost and alienated from God. But Jesus offers redemption in order to present us as Holy.

We can be holy, because He was Holy. He was free from sin. Jesus lived His earthly life as God, but never tapped into the God side of himself. Everything He did, he did as a human, like you and me. He overcame sin and death for us.

We are not the picture of perfection, but we will be presented as blameless to God the Father. Free from accusation. Everything we are accused of is stripped away.

If you continue in your faith, established and firm, we hold fast to the truth of the gospel. That truth is Jesus is Lord.

Prayer: *Lord God, we come before you, we thank You for your glorious presence here. We worship You, Jesus, knowing that you are high above all things! You created all things and hold all things together. You reconciled us by making peace with your blood shed on the cross.*

Today, there might be someone here that has yet to accept the invitation into peace with Jesus. I remember my rebel heart accepting His invitation for peace and a weight lifted. I went from alienated to part of His family. Today, there may be someone who feels far from Him. But He is not far from you and His arms are spread wide inviting you into His peace. You can accept His invitation by praying out loud, in your seat, "Jesus be my Lord and bring me peace."

As simple as that, make Him Lord and receive His peace. I will give you a moment to pray, "Jesus be my Lord and bring me peace."

Jesus, we thank you for loving us and holding all things together.

"Lord, we thank you for being our Good Father. Jesus, we worship You, Supreme above all. Holy Spirit, guide us and lead us as we surrender to You. Amen."

If you said yes to Jesus' invitation for the first time, stop by our welcome center. We have a booklet for you!