

Stable and Steadfast

Jonny Kiedrowski | Colossians 1:15-23

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Have you ever been to an event where someone received an introduction? Maybe you've seen a national speaker, or heard an author give a talk. Maybe someone important came to a graduation and charged the students to make the world a better place. I think we've all heard a talk like this and so we've all heard someone get introduced. Inside a good introduction, we hear about where someone came from, what they've achieved, what they're working on now. A good introduction whets our appetites to know more. An introduction is a call to pay attention.

And so when the Apostle Paul introduces Jesus in Colossians 1:15-23... It's a call to do just that. To pay attention. Who is this Jesus? Where did he come from? What has he done? What is he doing now? Why should we care?

Colossians Chapter 1, beginning at verse 15

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 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. 17 And 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, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. 19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. 21 And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 22 he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, 23 if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

What a beautiful passage. What an amazing and clarifying introduction to the person and work of Jesus. This is an unparalleled introduction. There is no one like Jesus. When I read this out loud I think to myself: "why do I even have to preach?" And then I turn on the news. I look out into this room. I think about all the conversations I've had in the last couple of weeks and I know where people's hearts are. I know where mine is.

When Paul wrote the book of Colossians he was writing to people who were struggling with what to believe and where to put their hope. I think that today many are struggling with the same thing. As we dive into this passage there are three things things that we're going to see.

This morning we're going to see how the bible describes all that Jesus is, we're going see why sin is the greatest problem of all, the greatest problem we've ever had and how Faith in the Gospel is all that we need to solve our greatest problem.

And if there is something to remember
a thought to hold in your mind during this message its this:
Because God is able to save - I can be stable in faith

Let's begin to unpack our first section:

1. All that Jesus is

and within this point we can actually see two distinct categories of description that help us know Jesus better. The first is in **an introduction to Jesus Our Creator** and the second is **an Introduction to Jesus our Savior**.

And we see Jesus, our creator in

Vs. 15-17

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 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. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

There is a lot here. This could be the whole message right here. The first verse could be the whole message. Those of you who are parents, or maybe worked in the nursery here Have you ever had a kid draw a picture of you? Like they work so hard on it and draw it and they bring it up to you because they're proud of it and you look at it and you're like...

"thank you I kind of look really fat in your picture."

You know, you get one of these pictures and all of your features have been exaggerated in one way or another. The image created is of you but..... barely.

But when it says that Jesus is the image of the invisible God what he means is that he is God. He is exactly God. Who he is and what he is like is exactly what God is like. He's the image of God. And Paul is not the only one who says this. Jesus in John 10:27-30 says

27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. 30 I and the Father are one."

and again in John 14:6-9

6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him." 8 Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." 9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

Jesus and the Father are one. He is the image of the invisible God. Jesus has made the invisible God visible.

It goes on to say in V.15 that Jesus is the firstborn of all creation.

When you look at that you might be thinking: “well how can he be the firstborn of creation if he’s God?” God isn’t a created being. This is exactly the thing that makes him God. He’s the uncreated one” But this language of Jesus being the firstborn isn’t referring to Jesus being created, it’s referring to his status. He’s the firstborn of all creation and it’s the firstborn who receives the the inheritance. Jesus is the eternally begotten, not created, Son of God and all of Creation is his.

The first three verses of the book of Hebrews fleshes this thought out a little more
Hebrews 1:1-3

1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. 3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

Jesus Christ, the heir of all things

So right off the bat, in the first verse of our passage today, in one verse we’ve gained a deep insight into who Jesus is. He’s the image of the invisible God - Exactly God
The firstborn of all creation - creation and all that’s in it is his inheritance

Knowing Jesus in his deity - in his Godliness, and in his status leads us to awe and worship. And reflecting on who he is in his power can change our experience as believers today. Especially as we experience the kind of trials and disconnection that we have in front of us right now. God has no need to shelter in place. Today, He is with us still, and just as he said in Matthew 28, he is with us always.

What we believe about Jesus is the most important thing that we believe because it redefines everything else. Believing right things about Jesus doesn’t give you ammunition for a theology debate, it gives you a refuge of hope because you know and believe that Jesus is above and before everything.

Finishing up our introduction to Jesus, our creator, our next verse in Colossians, v. 16-17 says

16 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. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Isn’t it good news to hear that someone is holding all things together? That suffering isn’t senseless and without meaning. Isn’t it good news to hear that rulers and authorities that have an effect on our lives right now were created to serve at the pleasure of God’s sovereign will? Isn’t it good news to know that everything was made for a reason?

I want you to take a moment and ask yourself a question.
Is the Glory of God the reason why I do what I do?

Is the reason why I do - what I do - how I do it, the glory of God?

Because all things were created through him and for him and that includes you. Jesus is the creator and you are not. You are created, like everyone and everything else.

I hope this doesn't burst the bubble that holds your self worth and self esteem. Because this thought should not make you feel small or insignificant. And that's because you are not the author of your significance. In fact, if you're a Christian today the most significant thing about you is that Jesus Christ, the creator and sustainer of the whole world and all that is in it, The most significant thing about you is that this Jesus would lay down his life for you, so that you might be restored to God.

This is our next look into all that Jesus is.

An introduction in to Jesus, Our Savior

Picking back up at V. 18

18 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. 19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

This morning I am so thankful that Jesus Christ is the head of the Church.
Though we are scattered and separated over many miles this morning, in these moments where being connected together as Sovereign Hope Church seems almost impossible
We are still wonderfully and eternally connected to Jesus' Church and he is faithful.

But, I miss our church. I miss gathering together. I want this to be over.
I can say as a Pastor of this church that the sorrow of the loss of our meeting together has made me appreciate even more the sweetness of our meeting together.

Jesus has saved us to be his people together. To fellowship with one another, and encourage each other in the gospel. To teach one another, disciple one another, care for one another. I hope that in this season you are calling and texting, reaching out to brothers and sisters in Christ- praying for one another and meeting needs as each one can.

This glorifies God because
Our love for one another reflects our understanding of the great love that God had for us as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us.

Back to V. 18 it says

8 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.

Jesus is the creator and firstborn of creation and he is the firstborn from the dead the scripture says that this is so that in everything he might be preeminent. Preeminent is just a fancy way of saying first. Jesus is first. He is before all else. He is before all things including resurrection and the new life that is promised to believers.

If Jesus is the firstborn, who's the second born? It's his body, it's the church. The head goes first and his body, the church follows. And this is good news. Good news for today. If you needed good news today. If you're afraid and anxious about this world, I'd like to comfort and remind you that this world is not your home. And as Jesus dies and rises first, he is showing what will be happening for believers one day.

Look at 1 Corinthians 15:20-23

20 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.

So has the hope of heaven been real for you before all.... this?
Or has it taken something like a worldwide pandemic to wake you up to eternal realities?
Has it taken a stock market crash to help you see that your treasure should be stored in heaven? Has suddenly being out of control helped you turn in worship to the one who has been holding it all together?

This then is God's grace to you in this storm. Embrace it and treasure it. Thank God for it. See Jesus Christ for all that he is and your heart will be satisfied no matter what uncertainty the days ahead hold.

If you're not a believer today, maybe God through these uncertain times, through his word and through his Spirit has gotten your attention and you have found that the places you have placed your hopes are counterfeits. You're looking for peace where there is no peace. You have loved the world and now you find, it does not love you back.

This is because nothing in this world can satisfy you, or save you, or give you security. Only Jesus can.

1 John 15:17 says

15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. 17 And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

Praise God that Jesus our head has gone to make a way for us, his body to enter into eternity with him and that God is right now helping our hearts to love him more than we love the world. We love God because he loved us when we were unlovable. While we were still sinners, Christ, the image of God, the firstborn of all creation is also our Savior who died for us and paid our ransom.

And we're moving on to our second point.

2. The greatest problem of all

Picking back up in V. 19

19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. 21 And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 22 he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him,

There is an interesting word in our passage today. It's the word "All". It's used over and over again. Creating this rhythm and emphasis behind the whole passage. Let's point some light on this. Here are all the alls about Jesus in this passage.

The Alls

Jesus is the firstborn of all creation (v. 15)

Jesus Created all things and all things were created through him and for him (v. 16)

Jesus is before all things, (he is of first importance) (v. 17)

Jesus is holding all things together (v. 17)

in Jesus all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell (v. 19)

And Jesus has reconciled to himself all things (v. 20)

I bring this up because as we wrap our minds around all that Jesus is we come face to face with a stark reality.

Look at Vs. 19-20

19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

This Jesus, who is all of these things had to suffer and die in order for there to be any hope that we might please God. This is how bad sin is. Our greatest problem is not Covid-19 or volatility in the stock market, our greatest problem is that we have sinned against a perfect God and left to our own abilities, we would have no hope for things to be made right with him. Our problem with sin is so drastic, so profound, so costly that the creator of the world has to die and shed his blood in our place so that we might be able to be reconciled to God. God knows exactly how big our problem is and Jesus has always been what we've needed.

Have you ever inaccurately assessed the scope of a problem?

Maybe you have, like me, at some point miscalculated what it will take to fix the plumbing under your sink. And then after awhile you find yourself taking your fifth trip from Lolo to the home depot on North Reserve to grab one more part.

Most of the time we do a terrible job of assessing the destructiveness of Sin. We think we can figure it out. We want to feel ok with ourselves. We can clearly see the things that are wrong with others, but we deny the reality about what has gone on in our own hearts and with our own actions. God does not have this problem, and V.21 of our passage helps us to see what sin has done to our relationship with God.

It says

21 And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds,

Because of sin We were alienated from God - estranged from him. We were hostile in our mind - our thoughts about God were not only wrong, they were opposed to him. We were his enemy. And we were actively evil, engaging in evil actions against a holy God

Have you thought about your sin this way?

Whether you are a believer or not, what effect would it have on the way you lived your life if you held in your mind the great cost of sin? For believers, while our sins have been forgiven, we can grow callous in our relationship to God when we continue in sin and become an ineffective testimony of the gospel change that we say we have experienced.

For unbelievers, without faith in Jesus, the situation is much worse. To be alienated from God, hostile in mind and evil in deed, is to be under God's wrath and utterly without hope. Sin separates us from God and without faith in Jesus that separation is eternal.

But when we were without hope, without the ability to even understand the depth of our problem, This Jesus who is all of the alls looked on sinners with mercy and

V.22

22 he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him,

Only Jesus can make the alienated, hostile, and evil people
Holy, Blameless, and above reproach

There's only ever been one person in the history of the world that has been holy, blameless and above reproach and as it says in 2 Corinthians 5:21

God made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

It's not our righteousness that we get here. It is God's righteousness. And we get it not because our faith is righteous, but because we are "in Christ." Faith unites us to Christ. He is the head and we are his body. He takes our sin. We take his righteousness.

No, the greatest problem in the world isn't going to be solved by Donald Trump or Nancy Pelosi, or even Dr. Fauci. The greatest problem in the world has already been solved by Jesus Christ who took our sins in his body and paid the penalty for them in full.

And because God is able to save, I can be stable in faith.
If Christ can do all that that He can do, I can trust him.

3. Faith in the gospel is all we need

Sin and our separation from God has always been our greatest problem and the only solution to our problem with sin is the gospel of Jesus. This is a true statement and one I would agree with, but I want to clarify it a little more.

The only solution to our problem with sin is the gospel of Jesus **and believing it**. You must believe to be saved. Belief is what it comes down to. Faith is what it comes down to. That's what it has always been. We are saved through faith.

Let's finish our passage.

We'll back things up to v.21 for a little context.

21 And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 22 he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, 23 if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

We are saved through faith and we must continue in faith. Through a faith that doesn't move. Through a faith that is stable and steadfast and does not shift from the hope of the Gospel.

With the way the world is right now our hearts are going to be tempted.

And while faith in the gospel is all that we need for peace in our hearts, we will be tempted in the coming weeks to think we need more. To think that Jesus is not enough.

To think that what will save us is the Gospel "plus"

The Gospel plus a big savings account or the Gospel plus our health.

Or the gospel plus a big stack of toilet paper in the garage.

At the end of it all, every other hope can fail you, but Jesus never will.

I read a Tim Keller quote this week that said

"You don't realize that Jesus is all you need until Jesus is all you have."

Today would be a good day to ask yourself, Have I allowed anything to shift my hope for salvation from faith in Jesus and his death and resurrection? Am I trusting in Jesus plus something? What are some ways that my faith isn't stable? How can this be helped?

If you're wondering how faith grows, I have one last piece of good news: Faith grows in times like this.

James 1:2-4 says it this way

2 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, 3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. 4 And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

To have the Gospel of Jesus as your only hope is to be lacking in nothing.

It provides a clarity to your trials, a refuge for your weary soul, a comfort for your anxious heart, and a peace that passes all understanding. When we trust and depend on Christ and find him faithful, our faith grows. It grows deep and tall and that is what we will need to weather life's storms. That's what we will need to be stable and to be steadfast. We have an opportunity today to grow in our faith and be distinct in this world as believers in Jesus. Don't miss it.

So today as we close, maybe you've been introduced to Jesus Christ today, or maybe in the midst of all the panic around us, you've had a badly needed reintroduction. I want to encourage you to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and the power of his resurrection.

I want to encourage you to look at all that Christ is. and consider the lengths he has gone to and what he endured to restore us to God. To believe that we don't need to be anxious about the days ahead because we can trust in the one who holds it all together.

The Lord of all creation suffered in life so that you might not fear death and He will not leave you now. Don't turn to the right or the left to find hope. Christ is still your salvation and your peace and He has already proved himself faithful at the cross, caring perfectly for your soul now and for eternity.

Because God is able to save - We can be stable in faith.