

ChristReformationChurch

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Christ Exalted and Ascended (Part 2)

June 4, 2017

Sermon Text: Colossians 1

Scripture Reading: John 1

We are looking at Colossians in order to use at least this first chapter to present the gospel to people. We want them to understand who Christ is, why He came into this world, what He has accomplished, and most importantly, *that every human being has been created for the purpose of knowing Christ.* We said –

Man exists “for” Jesus Christ. Every human being was created to be in a vital, intimate relationship with Christ. He is our Creator and He created us so that we would know Him and He know us. You are here on this planet, created in the image of God, so that you can worship Him,

give thanks to Him, and enjoy Him forever. To know Christ is to have life. To not know Him is to have no hope, to remain blind to His glory and truth, and to perish out of His presence for all eternity.

Therefore, this business we are considering this morning is THE most vital and important subject for every man, woman, young person, or child. Nothing is more vital. Because if you know Christ, you have life – eternal life. If you do not know Him, you are dead in your sins.

John 17:3 And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

2 Corinthians 4:6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

1 John 5:18-20 We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who

was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him. (19) We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. (20) And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

See it? To know Christ, to be able to see His glory, to believe that He is the Son of God come to set us right before God, *is life. Eternal life.* It is to be set free from the evil one (Satan), and as Paul said in that verse above (2 Cor 4:6), those who know Christ know Him because God has done an act of creation in them – “Let there be light” – and by His power we were brought to life, given eyes to see, faith to believe, and to understand that *in the face of Jesus Christ, we see the glory of God.* But without Christ, without this miraculous creative work being performed in our hearts and minds, all of this business remains foolishness to man dead in his sins –

1 Corinthians 1:18 For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

And so we put the question to you this morning – just what do you think of all of this? What do you think of Jesus

Christ? Of the Cross of Christ? To people who are perishing in their sins, it is foolishness. But if you are beginning to believe it, to see it as truth, to see your need for Christ, then that is evidence that God is at work in you, drawing you to Him.

Listen as Paul explains to the Christians at Colossae what Christ has done for them:

Colossians 1:9-14 And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, (10) so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

(11) May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, (12) giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

(13) He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, (14) in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

See it? If you do not know Christ, if you are still in the same condition you

were in when you were born into this world, then you are living in “the domain of darkness” – you do not have redemption or forgiveness of your sins. But that all changed for these Colossians when Epaphras came to them and explain the good news of Christ to them, and they believed.

Let me ask you this: *Do you want to be set free from the domain of darkness (Satan’s kingdom of blindness and death)? Do you want your sins to be paid for and forgiven so that you stand righteous before God? Do you want to live?* Well then, keep listening very, very carefully.

Let’s read once more this section in Colossians 1 that tells us some incredible things about Jesus Christ:

Colossians 1:15-20 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.

We touched on these things last time, but we need to consider them more carefully. These are profound truths that are mind-blowing if you think carefully about them.

First, Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God.

God is spirit. No one has ever seen God –

John 1:18 No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

Jesus Christ is the God-man. He is fully God, the second Person of the Trinity. So He could say “he who has seen me has seen the Father.” Jesus Christ is the eternal Word of God come into this world to reveal God to us. Therefore, if you want to know God, if you want to know what He is like and what He is saying to you, look at Jesus Christ. Listen to Jesus Christ. Open up your Bible, go to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John (the Gospels) for starters and begin to read. As you see Christ in action and as you hear His words, *you are seeing God and you are hearing God.* And He has some vital things to say to YOU which concern the eternal destiny of your soul.

Jesus Christ is the firstborn of all creation. This does not mean that He was created. The Son of God is God, eternal, without beginning or end. Firstborn means that Christ is pre-eminent over all creation, and it also means that He is the firstborn from the dead, the first to rise from the dead. Christ is exalted above all things:

Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

John 17:1-2 When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, (2) since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.

Understand? Jesus Christ is the King of kings. There is no power or authority in all of creation that is above Him. In fact, ultimately He is the only One who has power and authority. He is the One who has the power to judge and to forgive –

Matthew 9:2-7 And behold, some people brought to him a paralytic, lying on a bed. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven." (3) And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, "This

man is blaspheming." (4) But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? (5) For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? (6) **But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins**"—he then said to the paralytic—"Rise, pick up your bed and go home." (7) And he rose and went home.

Let me ask you a question. *Do you want to know and be on good terms with the Judge of the universe? Do you want to know the One who is the ONLY One who can forgive YOUR sins?* I hope that your answer is "of course!" Well, Jesus Christ is that Person.

Acts 4:10-12 let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. (11) This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. (12) **And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."**

Paul continues with this litany of incredible announcements about Christ:

(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.

I suppose in a way this verse states the most amazing facts about Christ. We have been seeing these things in the Sunday morning class, and they bear repeating here:

ALL things were created by Jesus Christ. Way back in the beginning of time –

Genesis 1:1-3 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. (2) The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. (3) And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

....you have all three Persons of the Trinity present and active. God the Holy Spirit is "hovering" over that black chaos, ready to act in creative power. God the Father is resolved to create the universe. *And it is by His Word that He effects this creation.* This Word – "And God said...and it was" – is none other than Jesus Christ. The same One who became man, who came into this world as the baby of

Bethlehem – was and is that Word by whom God created all things.

John 1:1-5 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (2) He was in the beginning with God. (3) All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. (4) In him was life, and the life was the light of men. (5) The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

All things were created by Him. And that includes YOU, and me! Every human being was created to worship and enjoy and *know* Christ. To have a living, real relationship with Him. And in doing so, *to have life.* To live in the light instead of being blinded by this fallen world's darkness. Why don't people see Him? Why do they mock and crucify the Son of God? Answer –

John 8:23-25 He said to them, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. (24) I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins." (25) So they said to him, "Who are you?" Jesus said to them, "Just what I have been telling you from the beginning.

John 8:31-32 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in

my word, you are truly my disciples, (32) and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

John 8:42-45 Jesus said to them, "**If God were your Father, you would love me**, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. (43) **Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word.** (44) **You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires.** He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. (45) But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me.

And there is more here in Colossians –

“all things were created through him and for him”

People go to all lengths, all stretches of common sense, to explain away the existence of Christ our Creator. When I was in college, I majored in biology and I enjoyed it very much. But the entire system was based upon the notion of a-theistic evolution. No-god evolution. If, for example, you study what is called *taxonomy* in botany, you will see that the entire system of grouping and organizing plants (and animals as well in zoology) is a

statement of the notion of evolution. For example, *gymnosperms* (“naked seeds”) – coniferous trees and so forth are rightfully grouped together as opposed to another grouping called the *angiosperms* – the flowering plants. And the pronouncement is not this:

God the Creator made fir and pine and cedar and hemlock...to bear cones in which their seeds are formed and protected and dispersed.

No, it is this –

In the chaos and darkness of nothingness, nothing became something, and that something by itself eventually first became the more primitive gymnosperms and ultimately evolved into flowering plants that are more fit to develop and survive because they produce flowers for their seed.

See it? The whole thing is designed so that man does not have to acknowledge and give thanks to God. Without Christ, man the sinner lives in darkness, unable to see what the Bible calls *the blazing, shining, glory of Jesus Christ even though the entire creation is constantly blasting the truth of His existence before everyone:*

Romans 1:18-21 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of

men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. (19) For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. (20) For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. (21) For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

But what is the actual truth? This –

“all things were created through him and for him”

The “him” as we have seen is *Jesus Christ*.

YOU exist for Jesus Christ. You were created by Him, for Him. But there is this problem – *sin*. What is it?

Sin is the violation, by man, of God’s Law. Sin is the active breaking of God’s Law, and the passive disregard of it. People may deny it. They may fancy themselves to be quite “good.” But we are not judged by our own standards of “goodness.” We are judged by God’s perfect, holy standard. And by THAT measure, all of us are guilty.

All we need to do is point people to the Ten Commandments and any honest person will not get by the very first commandment, let alone all ten, before admitting “I have sinned.” [Note: You can read the commandments in Exodus chapter 20]. “You shall...You shall not.”

And because of this sin, in our natural condition in which we are all born into this world, we are separated from God. Now think about that. What does it mean to be separated, cut off, from God? To not know God? Paul rehearsed it a bit in Colossians 1 –

Colossians 1:19-22 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,

Think it through. If Jesus Christ is *the Life and Light of men*, (see John chapter 1 on this), then *to be alienated from Him, to be in a state of hostility of mind toward Him, to rebel against Him and do evil deeds instead of obeying Him and loving His commandments, is to be cut off from*

life! And what does that mean? To be cut off, to be alienated from life? *Simply this – it means to be dead.* And that is exactly what the Bible tells us about man's condition as long as he is estranged from Christ –

Romans 5:20-21 Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, (21) so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Sin reigned in death. *Death.* If you do not know Jesus Christ, if you have no relationship with Him, then you are *dead in your sins*, no matter how much you claim that “Man! Now this is living!”

YOU were created by and for Jesus Christ. The purpose for your existence is to know Christ and for Him to know you. God did not create you *for death and condemnation*. That is the result of man's – of *our* – rebellion against Him. Christ came into this world to set it right, to pay for (redeem) our sin on the cross, so that all who believe in Him might be what the Bible calls *justified* before God – put right with Him -

Romans 5:9-11 Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him

from the wrath of God. (10) For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. (11) More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Let me speak for a moment to *religious* people. It is one thing to tell someone about Christ who makes no claim at all to be religious. It is quite another to tell the self-righteous person the gospel. That is where you meet even more stubborn resistance –

Mark 2:16-17 And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" (17) And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

As long as a person pursues a religion that supposedly is a system by which the sinner can make himself righteous before God, there is no hope for that person to be saved. None. That is why Jesus had so many conflicts with the religious leaders of the Jews in His day, and the same continues in our day.

Let me say this very, very pointedly and clearly –

You may have been raised from childhood in the church. So much so even that church, and memorizing Bible verses, and singing in the church choir, and talking about Bible doctrines – seems to make up your very purpose in life. The kind of person, you see, who is at church every time the doors are opened. *But the Pharisees did all that too. And when the One who was God came into their presence, they hated Him!* All down through history, the greatest enemies of Christ have been found in religious circles. And in the end, if your religion turns out to be all about you, all about what YOU have done, devoid of a true knowing relationship with Jesus Christ, then this is what you will hear on that Day when you stand before Christ –

“Depart from Me, I never knew you.”

Now, one final note. Listen to this scripture very, very carefully –

1 John 2:15-17 **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.

The *world*. Not just his globe that we live on and in. No. The *world* is a kingdom. It has a king and it has subjects and it has a philosophy – a worldview, a *religion*. Read the news. Look around. Listen to people who are citizens of the world. What do you see? You see a kingdom, you see people, set in absolute rebellion against Christ. You see people seeking life and existence *autonomously* (writers of their own law). Their love is for this world and they necessarily are hostile to God.

Now, this world is constantly calling, wooing, pressuring all of us to love it and serve it. To go along with it. To agree with its philosophies. And it also threatens and persecutes anyone who refuses.

The Apostle John is here telling us – don’t give in. Do not love the world. Do not keep swearing your allegiance to it. Because *it is going down*. It is perishing. Right now, at this very moment, this world is “passing away.” Your own temporal life in this world is passing away. Second by second, minute by minute, month and year by year, the days of your life are passing away just as they passed away for

everyone we have ever known whose bodies now lie in the grave.

But whoever does the will of God abides forever. What is the will of God? That you believe in Jesus Christ, that you know Him, that He knows you, so that you might live, even on the day that you die:

John 11:25-26 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, (26) and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"