



The Gospel Project – Sermon Outline

Title: The Incomparable Christ

Text: Colossians 1:15–20

Connection to Unit Theme: Jesus is God! False teachers attacked this truth in Paul's day, and they continue doing so in ours. While we must defend the deity of Christ often and well, this truth must also lead us to exultation and worship as it did for Paul in his letter to the Colossians.

Introduction Idea

The New Testament authors wrote of the deity of Jesus to combat claims against Him. But they also intended to prompt their hearers to worship and exult in their great God and Savior Jesus Christ. C.S. Lewis wrote, "A man can't be always defending the truth; there must be a time to feed on it" (Reflections on the Psalms, 7). With all the attacks on the truth of the gospel Christians encounter, we often neglect this point. We can spend much time arguing and debating with skeptics and atheists, forgetting to enjoy and delight in that which we defend.

The Colossian church experienced numerous attacks from false teachers. The exact nature of the Colossian heresy (or heresies) is debated among scholars. The way to combat the heresy is not through argument, but by proclaiming Jesus Christ and what He accomplished through His death and resurrection. In Colossians 1:15–20 Paul wrote one of the most profound summaries of who Christ is and what He accomplished. In doing so, he crushed the arguments of the false teachers, and gave the Colossian Christians, and us, even more reason to worship and exalt Jesus Christ as God. In this text we see Christ in relation to God, to creation, and to the new creation.

Sermon Division I – Christ's relation to God (vv. 15, 19)

Paul says Christ "is the image of the invisible God" (v.15). Paul is not thinking here of Christ's physical appearance, but to His character and nature. Genesis 1 says God made man in His image (vv. 27–28), to reflect His character and nature to the world. But sin marred God's intentions for man. No one is able to perfectly reveal God. But when God's Son entered the world, He perfectly revealed God's character and glory. N.T. Wright says, "Jesus fulfills the purposes which God had marked out both for himself and for humanity" (Colossians, 75.). The false teachers in Colossae seemed to teach that something in addition to Jesus was required for salvation. Paul assured them Christ was sufficient.

If you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus. This prevents us from making God into our image. In our minds, we tend to fashion God after our own thoughts and desires. We try to squeeze him into a mold and project onto Him something He is not. J.I. Packer writes, "Christian minds have been conformed to the modern spirit; the spirit, that is, that spawns great thoughts of man and leaves room for only small thoughts of God" (Knowing God, 12). Jesus keeps our view of God in check.



Application: Read about Jesus' life in the Gospels. Meditate on what He did in His death and resurrection. Discuss with other Christians the beauty and wonder of Christ. Sing to Him for His great love and mercy toward us.

Sermon Division II – Christ's relation to creation (vv. 15–17)

When Paul wrote Jesus is "the firstborn of all creation" (v.15), he did not mean God created Jesus, as some claim today. The very next verse proves this. "For by him all things were created . . ." (v.16). So what did Paul mean? He likely had in mind Psalm 89 and the role of the Messianic King: "I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth" (Ps. 89:27). Jesus is not a created being. He is the Creator who reigns over all creation! All that exists, He created. All He created exists "for him" (v.17).

Why is this important? Notice what Paul includes in the list of what Jesus created: "whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities" (v.16). Paul wanted to make clear that all authorities in heaven and on earth are under Jesus Christ's lordship and dominion. Abraham Kuyper said, "There is not one square inch, in all of creation, over which Christ does not declare, 'mine.'" Jesus upholds, governs, sustains, and rules over all things (v17). In this we exult.

Application: Are you trusting Christ with every area of your life? What are some things you are reluctant to completely surrender to Him?

Sermon Division III – Christ's relation to the new creation (vv.18–20)

Not only is Christ over creation, He is also over the new creation, the church. He is the head of the church (v.18). The universal church throughout the ages is ruled by Christ, as is each local congregation of believers who profess Him as Lord. Christ achieved this status through His death and resurrection because He is "the firstborn from the dead" (v.18). He took the curse of creation upon himself (Gal. 3:13) to bring about a new creation, and to "reconcile all things to himself . . . making peace by the blood of his cross" (v.20). Creation is now groaning to be set free and fully enter this peace Christ accomplished (Rom. 8:19–23).

Eugene Peterson said in a sermon: "The message of the American church is, 'You can do it!' But the message of the Bible is, 'He's done it.'" Jesus Christ is enough. He is a perfect Savior. All we need to do is look to Him and embrace the work He accomplished on our behalf.

Application: Do you find yourself relying on your own works and moral performance to save you? Why is resting in Christ so hard for us? Will you look to what He accomplished and trust Him to save you?

Conclusion Idea

Jesus Christ is God. Who He is, what He accomplished, and the future He holds for us should send our hearts soaring into worship. Jesus is incomparable. John Piper often says, "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him" (Desiring God, 10). Jesus Christ is infinitely satisfying. May we find our satisfaction in Him in order to glorify His Name in all things.