

Colossians: The Glory of Christ

by Mariano Di Gangi

The sermon explores the multifaceted glory of Christ as the Creator, the Revelation of God, the Reconciler of humanity, and the Head of the Church, urging believers to pledge their allegiance to Him.

Duration: 32:50

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Colossians 1:15-18, Hebrews 1:1-3

Topics: "Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the issue of pornography in North America, highlighting the alarming fact that there are more pornographic video outlets than McDonald's restaurants. The speaker emphasizes that this is a ten billion dollar industry that involves both crude and cruel elements, as well as the involvement of sophisticated intellectual civil libertarians. The sermon then transitions to a reading from the Bible, specifically the letter of Paul to the church at Colossae. The passage emphasizes the supremacy of Jesus Christ as the image of the invisible God, the creator of all things, and the head of the church. The speaker concludes by highlighting the work of the Holy Spirit in revealing the beauty and majesty of Jesus Christ, and the importance of recognizing and worshiping him as God.

Transcript

During this past week in a very particular way, many of you have been remembering the various aspects of the work of Knox at home and abroad with concentrated prayer. Let me thank you very much for having remembered various aspects of my own ministry in prayer during this past week. From last Sunday morning through to this Sunday evening between the Missions Conference at Ontario Bible College and the intercession at Ontario Theological Seminary and responsibilities in this pulpit as your interim minister, I will have either preached or lectured 22 times.

And I am grateful to those who have sustained this ministry through your intercession during the week. There's a food chain that shall remain nameless, but it's seen virtually everywhere on the horizon with its golden arches, whose slogan at times has been the butt of wit, six billion served and only two cows used. Would it astound you to know that in North America there are more pornographic video outlets than McDonald's restaurants? This is a \$10 billion business in which the crude and the cruel are strange belt fellows with the sophisticated intellectual civil libertarians.

This evening we will take a look at the problem and move toward a biblical solution. But now let us hear the reading of the word of God as it is recorded for us by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the writings of

the Apostle Paul, his letter to the church at Colossae, the Colossian Epistle, Chapter 1. And the reading begins at verse 15. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

For by him, all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities. All things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood shed on the cross.

Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior, but now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you wholly in his sight, without blemish, free from accusation. If you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel, this is the gospel that you heard, this is the gospel that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, this is the gospel of which I, Paul, have become a servant. Many years ago, when I was pastoring a church in the center of the city of Philadelphia, just at supertime one evening, a special news bulletin was heard.

A very distinguished visitor was coming to town and his motorcade would pass within 50 to 60 yards of our house. And so I took my youngest son, ran down into the street, and found that many other people had heard the same announcement. And they were all congregating together in the narrow canyons that are Center City, Philadelphia.

And my little son, Peter, said, Daddy, I can't see. So I picked him up, lifted him, put him on my shoulder, and in that very split second, the motorcade came by, and in it, John F. Kennedy, then President of the United States. Within a few weeks, he was gunned down by an assassin's bullet in Dallas, Texas.

As I lifted my son to get a view of a passing president and his motorcade, so today the Holy Spirit would take you and me and lift us on his shoulder to get a glimpse of the King of Glory as he comes by, drawn by the chariots of the four Gospels, praised by the Apostles of Holy Scripture. For it is the work of the Holy Spirit to point us in the direction of Jesus Christ. And it is the greatest joy of the Holy Spirit to enable us to see Jesus in all his royal majesty, in all his sublime compassion.

What is it that we see in this text? What is it that the Holy Spirit, speaking in this scripture, wants us to see about Jesus Christ? For one thing, the Holy Spirit wants us to see Jesus Christ as the creator of the universe. The Apostle Paul says that Jesus Christ is the firstborn over creation. The firstborn, according to a biblical way of thinking, was the one who had a larger share of the inheritance.

Jesus Christ, says the Apostle Paul, is the firstborn over all creation. He is the heir of creation. The whole created universe belongs to him.

But more than that, he's not only the heir of the whole creation, vast as it is, he is the one by whom creation came into existence. All things, says Paul in verse 16, were created by him. He was there in the beginning, long before he was conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit, long before his ancestors David or Abraham had ever seen the light of day, long before Noah and the flood, long before Eve and Adam, long before the foundation of the world from all eternity, Jesus Christ is.

And by him, all things were created. And that means that you and I have to be good stewards of the material resources of this world because they were created by Jesus Christ and they are part of his inheritance. God forgive us for squandering it.

God forgive us for polluting it. God forgive us for destroying it. God forgive us for not replacing it.

Ecology is no mere sociological concern, and the care of the environment should not be left to a fistful of professing students. Everyone who names the name of Christ confesses him to be creator and heir of the universe and what we do on this planet either glorifies him or robs him of his primacy. He is the Lord of creation.

Moreover, in verse 17, we are told that he holds all things together. In him, all things consist. This Christ is not only the creator of the universe from all eternity, he is with God, the Father, and involved in the work of creation, but he's the one who keeps creation together.

He is the keystone in the arch of creation. He is the hub that keeps together the spokes of the created wheel. He is the integrating factor.

You take Jesus Christ out of the life of a church and it falls apart and people fall into bickering with one another. You take Jesus Christ out of the center of a family and all of the pieces fly apart because we turn everyone to his own way. You take Jesus Christ out of an individual life as the decisive factor and personality begins to disintegrate.

Only when Christ holds us together is personality sound. Does the family find unity and does the church become more than an organization, a genuine community, the people of God? Firstborn over creation as its heir, the creator of all that is so that we must be responsible stewards of his work, holding all things together so that we have wholeness and concord and unity in him. The universe was also created for him.

He is the goal. He is the terminal point. He will work all things after the counsel of his will and his plan will be brought to full realization.

I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it, said Jesus, and that word of his will not fall fruitless to the ground. The kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our God and of his Christ that he might reign forever and ever for all things were made by him. All things are held together by him.

All things will be made subservient to his purpose for they were created for him. The spirit of God in this scripture wants us to see Jesus as the creator of the universe. But there's a second facet to this.

Not only is he the creator of the universe, but he is the revelation of the father. For he is described in the words of our text as the image of the invisible God. You remember the way that the letter to the Hebrews begins? God, who at different times in different ways spoke to our forefathers by means of his servants, prophets, has in these last days, in the final phase of human history, as the climax of his process of revelation, spoken to us no longer through servants, but in his son.

And this son, says the author of the letter to the Hebrews, is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of God's being. If we want to know what God is like, if we want an image of God, if we want to see and hear and touch God, then all we've got to do is see, hear, and touch Jesus Christ. For he is the image of the invisible God.

It's not as bad as it sounds. I'll be with you in 30 seconds. Writing to Timothy, the apostle Paul stressed that Jesus Christ was God manifested in the flesh.

And Jesus said, he that hath seen me hath seen the father. Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God. All that God is, Christ is.

Earlier this week, there was a bit of a dialogue between two Roman Catholic professors, one from the United States, one from the city of Toronto. And the question they were discussing was, does it make any difference to Christianity if Jesus Christ is divine or not? One took the viewpoint that it didn't really matter. And the other felt, as we must feel, that if Jesus Christ be God, then everything he said and everything he did has an abiding validity.

If Jesus Christ be not God, then he is not even a good man. Because he claimed to be God, and if he was not God, then he was a liar, and no perpetual liar can ever be good. It's not merely a matter of having Jesus as a good man, but of having Jesus as the man who is also God manifested in the flesh.

And if scripture teaches anything, it teaches that in him dwelt the fullness of God. He is God manifested in the flesh. He that hath seen me, said Jesus, hath seen the Father.

Why is it then that some famed theologians are blind to the divinity of Jesus Christ? The answer is not far to find, and one is not uncharitable for repeating what scripture says, that the God of this world has blinded the minds of those who do not believe. Lest, having their eyes opened, they might get a glimpse of the grace and glory of Jesus Christ and fall in love with him and bow down and worship him and serve him as their God forever and ever. It is an evidence of the work of Satan to blind the minds of people to the beauty and to the majesty and to the sanctity and to the divinity of Jesus Christ.

But if Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 4.4 that the root of unbelief is the blinding work of the devil, we are told in 2 Corinthians 4.6 of the marvelous work of God's Spirit, who takes away the dimness of our eyes and enables us to see and to get the image clear, to behold the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus. He is the creator of the universe. He is the revelation of the Father God manifested in the flesh.

More than that, he is also the reconciler of the estranged. Scripture is very candid. The Bible is utterly realistic.

And it tells us that between God and ourselves, there is not merely a drift but a rift. Scripture makes it crystal clear that something has gone wrong between God and man and the fault is 100 percent ours. The apostle writing to the Colossians makes it plain that there is something wrong with our attitude.

Our mind is resistant to the will of God. And this agrees with what Paul tells the Romans when he says that the carnal mind, the fleshly mind, the mind that is not renewed by the Holy Spirit, man who thinks in a way that comes naturally, egocentrically, is not subject to God, is absolutely independent so far as the sovereignty of God is concerned, wants to do things his own way. The carnal mind is enmity against God.

It cannot be subject to God. It will not be subject to God. That is the attitude of alienation and estrangement, separation from God in our ways of thinking, and separated from God in the deeds that we do.

For if there is an attitude of resistance within, there will be acts of disobedience without. The rift between God and man, between sinners like ourselves and the God of holiness and righteousness, is not a rift that is papered over by the writers of Scripture as though they were putting their brush into the bucket of a false optimism. No, they recognize the rift between God and man.

But they also let us in on the good news. There is not only a rift separating us from God in the way that we think and in the way that we act, but God from his side has taken the initiative to repair the rift, to throw the drawbridge over that yawning and deadly chasm. He from his side has opened the door that we might enter in.

He took all the necessary steps to remedy the rift and to bring about reconciliation from his side. The initiative in the work of reconciling belongs to God. When we were fugitives from him, he reached out toward us.

When we were blind toward him, he saw us in our need. When we were deaf to his voice, he spoke and he roused us from the sleep of death. The initiative is with God.

And the way in which God reconciled us to himself was through a unique person who would be both God and man at the same time. A bridge to be a bridge has to touch one shore and the other shore over the raging torrent that flows beneath. And Jesus Christ has a divine nature that links him with eternal God and a human nature that relates him to us.

For the author speaks of Jesus as having flesh and blood. There is a real humanity there that relates him to us. And he is the one in whom all the fullness of God dwells.

He is totally, everlastingly divine. And so he is able to lay one hand on the God whom we have offended and lay another hand on us who need to be apprehended. And he brings us together.

He is the one mediator between God and man. More than that, it's not only that his nature suits him ideally to do this work, being divine and human, but what he does is to remove the barrier, to clear away the roadblock that separated us from a holy and a righteous God. And that is what John the Baptist meant when he looked at Jesus and he said, behold, there is the Lamb of God who's going to bear away the sin of the world.

We now have clear sailing. We can go directly to the heart of God and find that he is no avenging judge, but a warm, loving, accepting and embracing father. Because Jesus Christ has healed the rift.

He has spanned the chasm. He has bridged the gap. He has opened the door.

He is the door. He has removed the roadblock. He has torn down the barrier.

And now through him, we can have peace with God. We can be reconciled to God. If, as the apostle puts it, we have faith.

If we believe in Jesus as our savior, we can be clear of sin and find acceptance with God. The creator of the universe, the revelation of the father, the reconciler of the estranged. One thing more, he is the head of the church.

For after having made peace through the blood of his cross, after having given his own life to pay the penalty for the sins of his people, after having sacrificed himself to remove the barrier of sin and open the

way of peace with God, he rose again from the dead. He is risen from the dead. He is the firstborn from the dead.

He is, as it were, the first ripe fruit, the one who predicts and presages a vast harvest that is yet to come. Because I live, said Jesus, you too shall live. I am he that died and is alive again, and in my nail-pierced hand, I hold the keys of death and of hell.

Jesus Christ has met and mastered the enemy. He has defeated death, and because of him, we too someday shall triumph. The last word does not belong with death and the grave.

The last word belongs to him who has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. He is risen from the dead and risen from the earth to the right hand of God that he might be crowned and that he might be glorified by the angels and the redeemed of all ages and recognized as the head of his body, which is the church, and that in all things he and he alone might have the supremacy. Because this Christ is the head of the church, he nurtures the church, he cares for the church, he feeds us upon his word, he shelters us round with his promises.

He is the head of the church, he cares for it and nurtures it as his very own body. Because he is the head of the church, he not only nurtures it and cares for it, he governs it and directs it. How we should be conformed to the will of our head in the development of the program of the church.

How we should be sensitive to what he wills and not pressure for what we may want. It grieves me to read in the official denominational organ or publication of our denomination that there have arisen men who dare to put into print the alienation and apostasy of their own minds, challenging the will of the head of the church in the matter of world evangelization and world mission, ascribing to the great commission of our Lord the same abiding validity that one would give to two drops of dew on a plant under the merciless heat of the sun. If Jesus Christ be the king and head of the church, then his will must become our will, and we must be identified with that will which says, go and make disciples of all nations, and that is as valid today as it ever was in the times past.

If he is the head of the church, then we not only benefit from his protection, and are cared for by his love, and are directed by his authority, but we must yield to him our allegiance. If we belong to his church, then in all things we must see to it that he and he alone has the supremacy, or as the older translation used to put it, that in all things he might have the preeminence. Does he have it? Have we taken our oath of allegiance to Jesus Christ, Lord and King? Joining the fellowship of the church is more than becoming part of a social gathering.

It's taking an oath of allegiance. It is giving our vow of loyalty to the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. It means that we recognize his right to rule over us not merely in this time of worship, but out there in the world where severe moral decisions day by day need to be made.

Have we given him our oath of allegiance, or are we merely members of an organization who pay lip service to his sovereignty? And if we give him our oath of allegiance by the words we speak when we come into the fellowship of the church, and when we sing hymns of praise about Jesus as Lord and King, are we willing to show the sincerity of our allegiance by our daily obedience in our personal life, in our life as members of families, in our life together as the community of faith, in our life as citizens in a world that knows him not? To give him our allegiance in this place and deprive him of our obedience out there in the world is the most reprehensible and shallow hypocrisy. God grant that the same Holy Spirit who today has

lifted us all, preacher and people, on his shoulder to see Jesus in all his glory, may not alone enable us to give him our pledge of allegiance, but to yield to him all the days of our years our hearts obedience until we see him face to face in all his glory. Let us pray.

Lord Jesus Christ, you are the King of glory. We would take our pledge of allegiance and renew it today, and we would show the sincerity of our loyalty by a daily, faithful, and costly obedience. So help us to live for your honor and glory, and then at the last, behold you in all your majesty and your glory.

Amen.

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