

Christ Community Covenant Church
Colossians: Redeemed - "All things were created through him and for him!"
Pastor Dave Scherrer - June 14, 2015

[Sunday Paper – bad news]

For many, what philosophers call the **Problem of Evil**, is the single most devastating conundrum and stumbling block to loving God and giving Him honor and allegiance. They say, **How can a loving God allow all of this? If God created all things, and God loves us as they say, then why is the world so terribly wrong?+**

How is Christ magnified in a fallen world like ours? In Ferguson, NJ, and Katmandu, Nepal, and in Mosel, Iraq, and Arvada, Colorado? Or a world like Second Chronicles where from the Old Testament we see king after king of Israel and Judah do terrible evils? How is Christ magnified in the fall of Satan from his position of perfection? In the sin of Adam and the fall of the entire human race? In the tower of Babel and the fracturing of the human race into languages? In the sale of Joseph into slavery into Egypt? In the betrayal of Judas?

God has not answered all of our questions about the sin and misery that is in the world. In Deuteronomy 29 the scriptures tell us that **the hidden things belong to God.** There are mysteries we will not fathom while **we see in a mirror dimly.** Here, in this fallen world, we are too finite to understand the fullness of the eternal and deep truths of God. We can only know and be known in part. But Paul tells us in his letter to the church in Corinth that **in the age to come we will know even as we are known.**

So the problem of evil will never fully be fathomed. But God has not been silent about these things. There are things he wants us to know. The honor of his Son is at stake in the spectacular sins of history and their global purpose in the glory of Christ.

Colossians 1:15-19

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.

First, let me just say that many scholars view this passage as an early hymn. It has the form of Hebrew poetry and Paul either may have penned the hymn here or was inserting the hymn in the copy of his letter as a way of capturing their imagination for Christ. You see that I noted some words by their frequency. You can do this kind of study on your own as well by looking for words that are used often in a passage you may be able to discover premises and important themes in the passage. For instance here I noted that in these four verses the words **all things** are used over and over, as though this were an important idea. Why do you think Paul was so pointed in this opening passage? What is it about all things?

All things?

Well for one thing **all things** speaks to our question of the morning regarding evil in the world. The short easy answer to the problem of evil is that he made us free moral beings with the capacity to choose good or evil, life or death. The capacity to yield to God or reject him. Many of us listen to the lies of the evil one and we end up choosing evil and death. Satan and his deadly lies steal and murder. That is the short and easy answer. And it is a powerful answer. But there is more. In order to understand the problem of evil, we have to have a strong grasp on biblical doctrine. We have to study who God is and know His purposes. So Paul gives us this amazing list of attributes and characteristics of Jesus:

There are 15 traits in all. Let me highlight some of them and then I want to come back to one in particular:

1. Verse 14: In him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.
2. Verse 15a: He is the **image of the invisible God**.
3. Verse 15b: He is the **firstborn of all creation**- that is, the specially honored, first and only Son over all creation.
4. Verse 16a: By him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities. (We will come back to verse 16.)
5. Verse 16b: All things were created *through* him.
6. Verse 16c: All things were created *for* him.
7. Verse 17a: **He is before all things**.
8. Verse 17b: **In him all things hold together**.
9. Verse 18a: He is the head of the body, the church.
10. Verse 18b: He is the beginning.
11. Verse 18c: He is the firstborn from the dead.
12. Verse 18d: In everything he is preeminent.
13. Verse 19: **In him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell**.
14. Verse 20a: He reconciles all things to himself, whether on earth or in heaven.
15. Verse 20b: He makes peace by the blood of his cross.

The entire list is worth memorizing. If your heart ever wavers and your soul grows cold, go here; memorize this litany of glories and ask God to give you deep desires that correspond to the measure of this greatness. If any person or any power or any wisdom or any love awakens any admiration or any amazement or any joy, let it be the greatest Person and the greatest power and the greatest wisdom and the greatest love that exists- Jesus Christ.

But for our purposes, go back with me to verse 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**.

Notice the three prepositions: %or **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**.+So Paul teaches us that Jesus Christ created all that is. They were created through him.

John 1:1-3

1 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 anything made that was made.

And we close our eyes and put on our imagination caps and when we read in Genesis about the creating we see the Triune God Father, the Word who is the Son and the Spirit;

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, %et there be light,+and there was light.

All things . . . All things . . . came into existence came into being by Him and For Him.

By him and through him

He is the imaginative force . *and by the word* of God, all things great and small came into being. He is the creative power, and through his power workings all things came into being - by and through him.

All that has come into being exists for Christ- that is, it exists to display the greatness of Christ. Nothing- nothing!- in the universe exists for its own sake. Everything from the bottom of the oceans to the top of the mountains, from smallest particle to the biggest star, from the most boring school subject to the most fascinating science, from the ugliest cockroach to the most beautiful human, from the greatest saint to the most wicked genocidal dictator- everything that exists, exists to make the greatness of Christ more fully known- including *you*, and the person you have the hardest time liking.

But of all the millions of things Paul could have mentioned that Christ made and that exist for his glory- he chose to mention these: ~~the~~ thrones, dominions, rulers and authorities.+Verse 16: ~~For~~ by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether *thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities*. [even these] were created through him and for him.+

There are evil supernatural powers that aim to deceive and destroy the human race. They have been decisively defeated at the cross where Jesus disarmed them and made his people completely secure through faith in Christ. But they still do much harm in the world because not everyone believes, and even believers can be hurt by them, but not destroyed.

So where do they come from and why do they exist? Colossians 1:16 gives a decisive part of the answer. Not the whole answer but a part we need to know. ~~By~~ him- by Christ, the Son of God- all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or *rulers or authorities*+That~~s~~ where they came from.

They were created by Christ. And why do they exist? Verse 16b: ~~All~~ things were created through him and for him.+They exist for Christ. They exist to make his glories known.

Now be careful. It doesn't say he created them evil. In fact, the little book of Jude speaks of ~~angels~~ who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling+(Jude 1:6). They were created good, and they rebelled against God. Paul knows this. He knows what they once *were* and what they *have become*. Therefore, when Paul says, ~~the~~ rulers and authorities+were created by Christ and for Christ, he means that God created them knowing what they would become and how, in that very evil role, they would glorify Christ. Knowing everything they would become, God created them for the glory of Christ.

Now why would Paul tell us this? Is it helpful to know this? Paul certainly thinks so, because these evil powers are the one thing Paul chooses to mention as an example of what was created by Christ and for Christ. Of all the thousands of things he could mention, he mentioned this. He wants us to know this. Why? Why does he think this is good for us to know?

That~~s~~ what this series of messages is about. The main point of this series is not information for your heads, but application to your lives. In 2 Timothy there is this intensely practical point of profound doctrinal truth: Timothy is afraid. The world is dangerous and fallen. There is great evil. And Paul wants to help him overcome his fear and be courageous. So Paul says, ~~Do~~ not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God+(2 Timothy 1:8). And then to help Timothy, he takes him back before time- ~~before~~ the ages began+ and tells him that already, before creation, before the sin of Adam, and the need for redemption, there was free grace and a divine sovereign purpose to save sinners. All of this profoundest of doctrine was brought up to help Timothy be less timid! Great biblical truths about Christ and creation and evil are the fuel in the fire of the God-centered human soul.

Christ is being raised up in this passage so that the dedicated believer can see the deep doctrinal truths and apply it into the world with a practical theology. Practical enough to give us hope in a dark and dying world. The Bible wants to make it clear. It is all about Jesus. And when your Sunday school or VBS teacher told you the correct answer to every question was ~~Jesus~~. they were right.

Hebrews 1:1-4

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.

After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴ having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

To be in Him means that we are abiding in his life and light and love. Jesus made it clear.

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

To be for him means that we are about his Kingdom priorities in the world. To seek and save the lost. As we keep on in this little letter we will see that it is all about Jesus and He is all about redeeming the world and all its evil to Himself . and hear this . He is about this for the sake of His glory.

Philippians 2:10-11

so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The terrible evils of the world are being defeated to the Glory of the Son. So I have a question for you this morning . . .

Are you For Him and In Him?

Everything depends on the answer to this question . . . And you can know. There does not need to be and confusion or doubt for you. If you have yielded to His Son, trusting in His redeeming work on the cross and if you have received the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit you are for Him and In Him. But there is a test for you . . .

Do you pursue His purposes?

Do you love his church?

Do you desire His character?

Do you long to know Him and His word?

All things to the Glory of God the Father, in the Name of the Son Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit

Benediction

Romans 11:36

For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

Discussion Questions:

Dave talked about the so called "Problem of Evil." Do you have a problem with evil (is this a stumbling block for your faith in Christ)? Is there a difference between evil and dumb bad luck? What makes something evil?

What is the most "evil" thing that you have experienced? How did God see you through that experience?

Scripture says all things work together for good for those who are called according to God's purposes? Whose good and how? . . . our temporary good (health and wealth), our long term good (eternal good), God's glory? All the above??

Re- read Colossians 1:15-20

Which of this long list of God's attributes do you count on the most? How so?

What do you make of the fact that God made **all things through** and **by** and **for** Christ (v16)? This is deep theology! How do we make it practical for our lives?

Do you believe in evil spiritual beings? Why do you think God allows them to continue to exist? Dave suggested that it is ultimately to bring God glory. Are you comforted by that? How does that awareness change your life?

What one "bad" thing in your life could you praise God for right now and why?