

# Colossians 1:15-23

**Date: Sunday, 13 February 2022**

**Scripture: Colossians 1:15-23**

**Sermon: Why We Can Trust Jesus**

**Preacher: Justin Ang**

## Passage

### Colossians 1:15-23 (ESV)

*Col. 1:15 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.*

*Col. 1:21 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.*

# Transcript

## Introduction

About a year ago, I found myself a little frustrated. When I see something wrong, I need to say something. So I was at Miranda Westfields and getting groceries from the Woolworths. And you know, since COVID, they've introduced wet ones and handsanitisers so you can wipe down the baskets and the trolleys before you use them. Anyways, I'm about to get some wipes to clean the trolley that Rachel and I were about to use when this lady in front of me decides to take a whole bunch. Except she's not there for Woolworths, she's using it for the table outside. And at that point, I'm pretty frustrated, and I said, "You know this is for Woolworths." And she responded, "Who made you boss?"

I was stunned. "Who made you boss?" I was pretty angry, because perhaps because my name is Justin, I felt a sense of lack of fairness, lack of justice at that point. But it reflects societies around the world, "Who made you boss?" Now, I certainly wasn't the boss of that lady's life, but it's a question that we all need to ask ourselves. Who is boss?

Last week, we started our series in Paul's letter to the Colossian church and it's a letter that's still relevant to us today, because a question that Paul addresses is, "Who is boss of your life?" For the church in Colossae, it was a big question because it seems that they were dealing with a heresy in their midst. It seems that they were dealing with a Jewish mystical group, a group that was influential in their small town. And it appears that this group was focused not on Jesus, but on celestial powers, the elemental spirits of the world (2:8), things above (3:2), and other sorts of powers (2:15). It's hard for us to imagine, but maybe I could give you a real life example.

My parents are from Asia, and sometimes we go back to Hong Kong and Malaysia. One thing that Christians in Asia have to deal with is ancestor worship. You might go to your ancestor's graves, and you burn incense as a way to show honor to them. To pay your respects so to speak. When someone dies, you even burn paper money, and different items so that you provide security for the person who has

died in their next life. Kind of like the Egyptians. You might find that a little silly, being in Australia, because you're an outsider looking in.

For us in Australia, that's not really a problem. Ancestor worship isn't a problem. We just have different problems. They're just first world problems. I would suggest that our problem is money. The love of money, whether it represents security, or power, or pleasure is our heresy. It's the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches that are a big danger to our lives today. It's the First World Problems that are the greatest threat to our faith today here in Caringbah. In fact, Jesus himself warns specifically against money in the sermon on the mount. He says that no one can serve two masters, either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

It's easy for money to become our boss. Our great love. Our master.

Today, I hope to encourage you with the truth that Jesus is your boss. I hope to encourage and remind you that Jesus asks us for our total allegiance. He is THE boss of our lives. And Paul gives us a couple of reasons why he is the rightful boss of our lives. He is the supreme over creation. And he is the supreme over the dead.

## **He is the Supreme over Creation (v15-17)**

Let's have a look at the first point. He is the supreme of creation. And because he is the supreme over creation it means that we are to give him our total allegiance.

Let's have a look at the passage together,

*Col. 1:15 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.*

Colossians 1:15-17 (ESV)

Here Paul is talking about Jesus. And he says that when we look at Jesus, we see God the Father. Jesus has made known to us God (John 1:18). But here, Paul also refers to Jesus as the firstborn of all creation.

And what we should understand is that the term firstborn is from the Old Testament. It's a term that's used to describe priority in both time and rank (Psalm

89:27). The firstborn is special in the eyes of the LORD. The people of Israel were considered God's firstborn son. And Jesus here is called firstborn over all creation.

It's really the idea that Jesus is supreme over all creation. He's supreme, because we're told that all things were made by him. Before creation was made, he was there with God (e.g. John 1). Jesus is greater than anything in all creation, he's greater than anything that has ever existed. Paul here says, Jesus is greater than anything in heaven, earth, visible, invisible, any powers, because he wants to emphasise how great Jesus is. Paul wants us to understand that Jesus' rule is comprehensive. Any thing, any person you can think of, he's greater than that.

And if that's true, it means that he created you. And he created me. And if he is creator, then he deserves your allegiance. Then he is rightfully your boss. My nephew loves putting together Lego toys. And he's getting really good at it. Imagine if I were to go up to him, and I were to smash it into pieces. He'd be pretty upset. And rightfully so. Because what he has created is his, isn't it? Because he's created the lego plane, it is his.

Paul's point is that because Jesus has made everything, he is greater than it all. And because it's greater than it all. He's in charge. That's what it means for Jesus to be the firstborn of all creation.

But it's more than that, because we're told that not only is he the creator of all things. But he is the one who sustains it. He's the one who keeps it going. That's what it says in verse 17, we're told that all things hold together because of him. The chair that you are sitting on, this pulpit that I'm preaching on, remains a chair, a pulpit because Jesus is keeping it going. Even your body and my body. The breath that you are taking right now, has been allowed by Jesus. That's what Paul is saying here. We are held together because of Jesus' will.

Recently, I was at a funeral, and the song that they played whilst exiting was Frank Sinatra's song, "My way." And I thought, okay, it's a nice tune. Until I started listening to the lyrics.

*And now, the end is near*

*And so I face the final curtain*

*My friends, I'll say it clear*

*I'll state my case of which I'm certain*

*I've lived a life that's full*

*I traveled each and every highway*

*But more, much more than this*

*I did it my way*

Sounds nice. But when I heard it, a little voice in my head was screaming, "Nooooo!" You might think you can do it your way, but Jesus is the one who keeps you going. He is the one who sustains. The one who holds all things together. We are so arrogant to think we can do it "my way." It's why James warns not to be arrogant in saying, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit" Why? Because you are a mist, and you ought to say "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that."

There's this story, of Prince Edward VII coronation in 1902. And apparently, there was a man reading the news about Prince Edwards' upcoming coronation. And the man noticed that the invitation to the coronation didn't say, Deo Volente, which is latin for "God willing". At the time, England was the greatest and strongest country in the world, 1902. What's the saying, "The best laid plans of mice and men often go awry"? Anyways, the coronation had to be postponed, because the prince came down with an abdominal abscess that needed surgery. Do you think maybe God was showing the world that God was greater than the greatest country at the time because they didn't write, "God willing"? Maybe, maybe not, but it illustrates Jesus's power, his complete sovereignty over the world.

What does it mean for us today? And even today, the last two years have been such a stark reminder that we are not in control. That we are completely and utterly dependent on Jesus and it's why we would be right to put our trust in him. Paul says he is supreme over creation, he's the boss, we can and should put our trust in him.

Let me ask, when you find yourself in fear, do we place our trust in him? I love what Jesus often calls his disciples, he calls them, "O you of little faith." It's a funny term but Jesus gets to the heart of it. Jesus has and always will be creator, and sustainer. It's a matter of how small or how big our faith is in him. There's the song, "He's got the whole world in his hands." There's a version that goes something like this,

*He's got the sun and the rain in His hands,*

*He's got the moon and the stars in His hands,*

*He's got the wind and the clouds in His hands,*

*He's got the whole world in His hands.*

*He's got the rivers and the mountains in His hands,*

*He's got the oceans and the seas in His hands,*

*He's got you and he's got me in His hands,*

*He's got the whole world in His hands.*

Jesus is supreme over creation.

## **He is Supreme over Death (v18-22)**

But let's talk about the second point. Jesus is supreme over death. Have a look with me,

*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.*

Colossians 1:18-20 (ESV)

Paul makes the point that through Jesus' death and resurrection, he has brought peace between us and God. We know the story from Genesis. Through Adam, the world is broken, our relationship with God is broken. Because of Adam's sin, we all deserve death.

But we know the story, God so loves the world that he gives up his one and only son. Through the shedding of Jesus' blood on the cross, the world is reconciled.

In fact, have a look at verse 21, this is what we can say ourselves,

*Col. 1:21 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*

Colossians 1:21-22 (ESV)

Jesus is supreme over death. Paul is showing us that through Jesus death and resurrection, that he is greater than even death. And through Jesus, we now have life and life to the full. We have been bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:20, 7:23). And because we have been bought with a price, we owe our lives to Jesus. Jesus now owns you. Twice. He owns you once because he creates you and sustains you. But he also owns you the second time, because he has purchased you by his own blood. You were bought with a price.

But that's not all. because he died on the cross and rose again, we're told that he is the head of the church.

If he is the head of the church, we follow his leadership, but we also need to follow him. (1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12:4-5). He is the source of the church's life, and he is also the church's lord. This church is completely dependent on him.

For the church in Colossae, it appeared they believed they needed to go through an intermediary in order to access God. Maybe it's like if people were to look to me, and they said, "help me Justin, I need you to access God." Paul's point is that, no! You don't need an intermediary, you don't need Justin. He's not special. Because Jesus is the head of the church.

People like to sometimes say to me, "You're the boss!" And I'll say, "No I'm not." Then they'll say, "Oh, then John's the boss." And I'll say, "no he isn't." Because really, Jesus is the boss of this church. And each one of us here make up the body of Jesus. We are members of one body. We all have something to contribute to the body of Jesus.

## **Our Response**

So what's our response? How should we response to Jesus being supreme over creation, over the church, over death?

I want suggest two things.

Firstly, praise. Many people believe that verses 15-20 here is actually a hymn. A hymn that the early Christians sung. It was a way that they would praise God. Singing about the supremacy of Jesus Christ, far above heaven and earth. I believe that that is an appropriate response to make for what God has done. It's why we sing in church, but we can praise God with our whole lives.

Secondly, remembering.

*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.*

Colossians 1:23 (ESV)

Paul calls us to continue holding on to Jesus in faith. Holding on. And one way is to remember what he has done. To remind ourselves. Re-mind. Placing our focus on Jesus, and his character, to remember what he has done. To remind ourselves that he is completely sovereign, he is infinite in wisdom, that he is perfect in his love.

I'm reminded of what Jesus Christ says in his sermon on the mount. He talks about a house that's built on sand and another that's built on rock.

*Matt. 7:24 "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. 26 And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."*

Matthew 7:24-27 (ESV)

Do you build your life on the Lord Jesus Christ, or do you build your life on riches, on power, on possessions? Let's pray.