**BCM Bible Study – Jan. 26-27, 2022**

**Colossians 1:15-23**

Introduction

This section of Colossians is a beautiful hymn of praise to God's “beloved Son” (v13), Jesus. Due to its content, this passage has been dubbed by many scholars to be one of, if not the most significant writing concerning Jesus Christ. It lifts him up against the background of false teaching in Colossae (which Paul will address directly later in the letter) that faith in Jesus was good, but not adequate for full spiritual enlightenment.

* Before we look at the passage, take a moment to think about how you have come to know Jesus. What phrases best describe to you who Jesus is and what he has done?

Who Jesus Is: **Read Colossians 1:15-20**

* How does this section of the letter connect with the previous verses?
* What does it mean that Jesus is the “image” of God? (v15)
	+ **Read John 14:8-11**. How does this help your understanding of this term?
	+ Is it difficult for you to relate to an “invisible” God? How does Jesus help overcome these difficulties?

“This means that we need look to no one except Jesus for the full revelation of God’s character. If God could only be perceived in closely-reasoned theological language, only the most brilliant could understand him. But the fullness was in Christ, and all we have to do is look at him. As we see him in the Gospels and hear him preached, we can know what God is like.” (Hughes)

* Has there ever been a time where you felt like God was unapproachable because you lacked something (wisdom, purity, etc.)?
	+ Was there something which helped you out of it? Are you still in a similar place?
* What is Jesus' relationship to “all things” in v16-17?
	+ **Read John 1:1-3 and Hebrews 1:1-4**. How do these passages add to the description of Jesus' supremacy seen here?
* What does it mean that Jesus is “the head of the body, the church”?
	+ **Read Ephesians 4:13-16**. How does this add to the picture of Jesus as head of the church?
	+ “Christ is the source of the church’s life.” (Garland)
	+ How does Jesus being the head show in practical ways in BCM or in your church? How can it make itself known?
* Jesus’ being referred to as the ‘firstborn’ in this section can be understood as Paul using a double entendre. The first meaning is straightforward implying an existence before creation, however, it can also be understood as the rank firstborn. This is important as evidenced within the Bible (ie: Exodus), the rank of the firstborn son was extremely important to the Jewish culture. Therefore, Jesus would be superior in both rank and time.

Jesus is described here as the creator and ultimate lord over all things, including beings and powers beyond our physical world.

* Are there any places where you struggle to understand Jesus as being the ultimate Lord **over all** things?
	+ **Read Job 2:1-6, Revelation 9:1-6** While both of these sections reference some unique interactions, the light of hope is that both of them see how other beings interact with receiving authority from God. Satan can only do to Job what God **allows** him to. The locusts could only do what God **allowed** of them. As we think of Jesus as Lord over everything, it can be strange yet we should lean into his authority over all.
* How does this description of Jesus’ lordship impact how you understand your sin against God?

What Jesus Did: **Read Colossians 1:21-23**

* What were the costs of Jesus' reconciling work?

“The language of estrangement in 1:21 implies a relationship gone seriously awry. Sin makes a shambles of created harmony and gives battle to God’s restoration work. Above all, sin lays waste our critical relationship to God in an infinite variety of tangled ways.” (Garland)

* Looking at the “before and after” picture in v21-22, what effects did Jesus' death have?
	+ How have you seen the evidence of “before and after” in your own life?
* How does this description of what Jesus (the lord and creator of all things) did prompt you to respond to him?
	+ “Christ does for us what we could not do for ourselves; but we must do, for our part, what he will not do for us. He ‘offers’ us to God, but it is none the less our own offering.” (Moule)
* Why do you think Paul adds the warning about continuing in the faith in v23?
* Do you feel like your faith is “stable and steadfast” (ESV) or “established and firm” (NIV)? (v23) If not, how do you work toward that?
* An interesting observation is that the words ‘faith’ and ‘hope’ once again appear as descriptors of what the continuing faith of the Colossians should look like. Any ideas why ‘love’ doesn’t reappear with these two verses? (See Colossians 1:5 for a refresher)
	+ Once again, even as we are still near the beginning of the letter, Paul is laying the groundwork for the correction of teaching for the Colossians. They seem to excel in love, and so he is instead reminding them to hold steadfast with both faith and hope in the Gospel and what it explicitly teaches.
* Each verse in this section can be seen as a description of a different time in the life of the believer: past, present, and future. What might be the purpose of pointing out how Jesus impacts each stage?

Conclusion

* How would this passage begin to accomplish Paul’s mission of correcting false beliefs that the Colossian church might have?
* Does this passage of praise to Jesus change the way you think about him or the way you would describe him to somebody? How so?

**Challenge:** Over the next week, reread Colossians 1:15-20 each day and meditate upon what it has to say about the supremacy of Jesus.