

Sermon 7th February 2021

Colossians 1: 15-20

The gift that keeps on giving

What has been your favourite gift of all time? I have a few – my coffee machine -as I love coffee and it just keeps on giving me amazing coffee- it never runs out unless I run out of capsules of course.

However, there are few gifts which if I'm truly honest I can remember getting at all.

But have you ever opened a present to find something that you've been wanting? Maybe you opened a present to see a bag that you had always wanted or a jacket but then the person who gives you the gift says there's something special in the pocket and you reach into it to find another gift and this time is made of gold or silver, then you look closer and it has an engraving on it with a message of love from the person who you love too. Well, I feel this passage is something like that.

This passage of scripture just keeps giving. Its as if Paul is externally processing who Jesus is and he's getting more and more of the revelation and wanting to share that with his readers, so they don't become discouraged or disheartened.

Have you ever had that revelation about Jesus? Well, if not maybe today is the day when you get a deeper glimpse of who he is.

It's thought that this part of scripture may have already been in circulation – maybe as a poem or a piece of music and Paul or someone who is writing on behalf of Paul is reflecting on to the Colossae church – let's take a closer look at it.

WHO IS JESUS?

1st Paul says Jesus is the Image of the invisible God.

Let's ponder that for a moment- the image of the invisible God. What is Paul trying to convey to us here? I believe he is wanting us to know how Jesus character, his personality, the way he loved and reached out to the lost the broken the poor the sick – that is the image of God in human form.

He is referring to what Christians call the incarnation. How God became man and dwelt among us. How God is not aloof, a distant God who doesn't understand what it's like to be human. He actually came and dwelt among us and did life with us. He was like us in every way but never sinned.

2nd Paul says he is the firstborn. This has been taken out of context many times by other religions who claim Jesus wasn't divine but merely a man. However, within the

context of the passage and throughout scripture we see clearly that what Paul is saying is not saying he was the first born of created beings, but he was the heir to God – the passage in Hebrews clearly says that Jesus was the heir of all things. He was God and he is God.

If we have any doubt about what I have just said we only need to look at the next line which says for in him all things in heaven and earth were created.

For in him! The ESV is much clearer as it says this.

For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible,

Paul is implying a phrase belonging only to Godhead and usually applied to the Father, but he distinctly applies it to Christ. He was the one who created all things. God created all things and Jesus is God in human form. If we were to have read today's Gospel reading which is John 1, we would have heard these words:

In the beginning was the word and the word was God, and the word was with God.

As many are aware the 'Word' in this passage is referring to Jesus. Paul in Colossians is reiterating John's understanding of who Jesus was and is. He is God and all things were created by him and through him and for him.

You see why I say this passage just keeps revealing more and more of Jesus. Its like a crescendo – at the end of the same verse – 16 we read this:

Things visible and invisible whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers all things have been created through him and in him.

That's a huge statement to make. Its like me saying I have made everything you see and don't see and not only that it was all made for me.

Some dictators I believe actually think this about themselves. However, they would struggle to say that they have created anything, but they often come across as believing that everything has been created for them.

However what Jesus showed us throughout his time on earth was the complete opposite to human leadership and power. He showed humility, servanthood and forgiveness to the point that even when he was being murdered on the cross, he forgave his persecutors.

The final section of the 1st part of the poem is this.

V17 He himself is before all things and in him all things hold together.

The thinking of commentators on this part of the scripture is that Paul is addressing how the church may have been listening to false teachers who were claiming

Jesus was the same as the angelic beings that were created by God, but Paul says no, he is superior to any created being and is above all things. This verse is the pivotal part of the poem as Paul joins who Jesus was to what he came to do. So, what did he come to do and be?

CHURCH

We find the answer to that in the next section v18.

He is the head of the body, the church.

Jesus is head over the church which is extremely important for us to remember today. We may despair at some leadership in the church. You may even wonder how on earth I can sit here and preach to you about Jesus.

Believe you me I don't do this likely however I am aware that I make mistakes and get things wrong and I thank God for Grace and mercy. I doubt many church leaders take their role flippantly as it's such an amazing privilege and responsibility.

If you do despair maybe remembering Jesus is head over the church and one day each of us will bow our knee to him and on that day any position or role, we have done in our lives will be irrelevant. The only answer we need to be able to give is that we believe he is Lord and we followed him with our whole being to the best of our ability.

CROSS

Then we begin to move further into this profound piece of scripture which says that in him the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.

I love this verse as it gives me an image of something being hidden inside something or someone else in this case Jesus.

When we become Christians, we also have the fullness of God embodied within us by the Holy Spirit who comes to dwell in us to help us to live lives honouring to God. We can only do it by the power of the holy spirit living within us. We may be able to put on an act for a while to people who think we are, trying to be a good person but we know without Jesus power in our lives by the power of the Holy Spirit living within us we would fall at the 1st hurdle.

Finally, Paul finishes with the cross! Its where we see the ultimate image of God portrayed. How he, although he created the world with no sin and no pain ends up paying the price for our disobedience from turning away from him in order that we could spend eternity with him.

I want to give a very weak analogy of how I try to understand this which sometimes I find difficult to understand and explain to others.

I have 2 children who I love with my very life. Now if they for some reason chose to stop speaking to me and even

decided they wanted to pretend I didn't exist then I would do anything within my power to draw them back into a relationship with me. Regardless of what they had done or said or behaved like. Would I die for that to happen- I'm not sure and I suspect that's stretching the analogy too far however that is what God chose to do when we turned our back on him. Rather than leave us to live a life of despair and hopelessness and to live eternity without him he chose to come among us and live a perfect life so that he could reconcile us to himself by his own shed blood.

In this passage as Paul reveals more and more of who Jesus is, we see what ultimate love looks like.

Even though Jesus is God he was willing to give it all up because of love. Not sappy love but real deep devotional love that says I want to spend time with you, and I want you to know me in a way that stops all fear brings a peace that comes from knowing me.

Jesus just keeps giving. He is the gift that will outlast any coffee machine or precious bit of jewellery or even human love, he is the one who created everything and for whom everything is created.

Paul gives us a glimpse of his awe in the passage and I hope that this week we can meditate on that and maybe have a deeper revelation of Jesus revealed to us.

