



The Supremacy of Christ: Why Jesus is Worth Following

Colossians 1:15-23

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Introduction

It's a joy and privilege to be able to open God's Word with you this morning. I've been reflecting this week on how thankful we are that you've partnered with us in the Gospel.... that you pray for us, want to hear what we're up to, that you've been so welcoming to us while we've been here.

But as part of my reflection, I've also been asking myself the question of why? Why do we do this? Why is participating in the mission and ministry of the Gospel so important?

As many of you know, BCA is 103 years old. In that time they've faced many challenges and hardships; why does BCA still send men, women and families into the remote and regional parts of Australia with the Good News of Jesus?

At my ordination, Bishop Mark posed the question of why, in this day and age, would people like us give up our time and energy and deal with distance from family and a whole range of sacrifices and hardships to share the Gospel? From a worldly perspective, it makes no sense!

- › Why do we keep following Jesus as our Lord and Saviour? You have 2 lovely church buildings here at Kiama, but in many other churches it's getting harder and harder to meet each week. As we face the sad loss of more and more faithful saints, and as fewer and fewer younger people come to believe in the saving work of Jesus, the question is always there isn't it? Why is it worth still following Jesus?

Well our passage this morning from Colossians gives us the answer to those very questions. Paul, writing to a small church plant who were dealing with internal pressures about their beliefs and worship practices as well as external pressures from the pagan society they lived in (sounds familiar doesn't it?), writes about a broad range of issues in the Christian faith.

But he starts with Jesus. He starts with the supremacy of Jesus. As we're going to see, it's Jesus' supremacy, his power and authority, that makes him worth following. It's who he is and what he has done that gives us all the motive and reason we need to keep on following Jesus.

So this morning, we're going to look at three reasons why the Supremacy of Jesus means he is worth following. We're going to look at the Supremacy of Jesus over creation, the supremacy of Jesus over the church, and the supremacy of Jesus over each of us.

But let's come before the Lord in prayer.

Reason 1 – Jesus is Supreme over Creation – vv.15-17

Paul begins by showing that the supremacy of Christ extends over all of creation.

Have a look with me again at verses 15-17...

15 The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Paul's thesis statement is that Christ is supreme over all creation because, as we see in v.15... He is both the image of the invisible God – that is, he is God – AND he is the firstborn over all creation – that

is, the first in importance. In his divinity and his humanity, he is without peer, without equal, without comparison.

The evidence for Paul's statement, for his thesis? Well Jesus is the agent by which all created things come into existence. And he lists exactly what he means by ALL things. In v.16... things in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, thrones, powers, rulers and authorities – all have been created through him... through Jesus! But not just created through... notice that Paul says they are created for him.

That's staggering isn't it?! When we think about the empires of world history, the huge business conglomerates, the individual leaders who wield so much power, Paul is saying they were created by Jesus and for him. How does that work exactly? Well we don't get an answer in our passage; Paul's point is that because Jesus is the creator and sustainer of all creation, it's evidence of Jesus' supremacy. If he is the creator he must, therefore, be higher in power and authority than what is created.

Thomas Edison was a prolific inventor, in fact he held over 1000 patents for his inventions. And we might know a few of the things he invented - the light bulb, the camera, the phonograph. But what we remember is the man behind the inventions... the creator... more than just the creation itself. And when we think of the creation, we almost immediately think about the man who created it, because he is the one with the greater prestige.

Paul's statement of all that Jesus has created is a pretty clear testament to the supremacy of Jesus isn't it – nothing is outside of his power and authority and rule.

But how does this help us?

Well it gives us hope and assurance in this life. We have hope in the times of greatest anxiety, fear and despair that God's plans and purposes are still being realised and brought to their completion... that God hasn't somehow lost control.

As we see on the news the terrible conflict in the Ukraine, and the countless other stories of human suffering, we have the hope and assurance that this isn't all we have... this world, this life isn't all we have. We have the hope of Jesus' supremacy over all creation. We're not helpless, subject to greater forces beyond our control. And we're not alone in those moments where we have reached the end of our capacity.

One of my favourite songs to listen to at the moment is Christ our Hope in Life and Death – which is an adaptation of some of the questions in the Heidelberg Catechism. The first question of the Heidelberg Catechism is, what is your comfort or your hope in life and death?

The answer is:

That I am not my own, but belong body and soul, in life and in death to my faithful saviour, Jesus Christ. Christ has full paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from all the power of the devil. He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in Heaven; in fact, all things work together for my salvation. Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him.

What incredible hope and assurance that is for us, that nothing is outside the control of Jesus, that all are under him in power and that they exist for his purposes. How much is he worth following when we can have a personal relationship with the supreme power over all creation?

So that's the first reason why the supremacy of Christ makes him worth following - he is supreme over all creation.

Reason 2 – Jesus is Supreme over the Church – vv.18-20

The second reason Paul gives us is in verses 18-20... we see that Jesus is supreme over the church. Look again with me at these verses.

18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. 19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Paul now turns to looking at the church, the redeemed and saved people of God. But his specific focus is on the church as the new creation.

So, Jesus isn't just head over the creation as it now is, he's also the supreme head over the new creation that is to come. He is the beginning in v.18 or, as the writer to the Hebrews says, "...the pioneer of our faith". But not only that, Paul reminds us that Jesus was the firstborn from the dead, so that... in everything, he might have the supremacy.

That Jesus would be the first and the greatest.

GOAT: One of the debates that often goes on in our society today, particularly when it comes to sportspeople is who is the GOAT?! Now if sports aren't your thing, talking about animals in a sporting context is a bit strange but GOAT stands for Greatest Of All Time. Basically, in comparing all the sportspeople to have played a particular sport, who is the greatest? Someone like Clive Churchill, or Don Bradman?

That's what Paul is picturing Jesus as here. He is the greatest of all time. And why? Well look at vv.19-20 – God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him. Can't get much greater than to be God in flesh! Not only that, but Jesus is the greatest of all time because of his sacrifice on the cross, which brings peace and reconciles all things.

OG: our secular society is obsessed with the original or the originator of something. And you may have seen this in discussions about

someone being the OG. Do you know what it stands for? Only recently did I find out that it stands for Original Gangster. Now while gangster culture isn't something we should condone, it is interesting that our society wants to know who was first, who was the original, who is the one that everyone who came afterwards models themselves on.

Paul is pointing to Jesus as the OG Christian here. But not just the originator, but the means by which the Christian faith works; that is we have peace with God, we are reconciled to him through Jesus' blood shed on the cross.

- › Friends there's no-one, no person in the church, that you will meet who has done or can do anything that comes close to what Jesus has done. Steve and Aiden and everyone else who serves here at KAC do a wonderful job, listen to them and follow their teaching. But don't make the mistake of putting any Christian in a place of higher honour or worth in your life than Jesus. Too often we have seen the effects of Christians following other Christians, rather than recognising the total supremacy of Jesus over the church and deeming him the only one worth following.

We can be so tempted to put our lot in with human leaders that we forget that we are all under the supreme rule and authority of Jesus. We are the body of Christ, but he is the head. He is supreme. But it's such a cause for comfort for us as well, knowing that the church, the universal body of believers, the saved and redeemed people of God are under the supreme headship of Christ... that whatever happens to the visible church, the true church of God is guaranteed because of Jesus.

That's the second reason, Jesus is worth following because he is supreme over the church.

Reason 3 – The Supremacy of Jesus over Believers – vv.21-23

The final element of Jesus' supremacy is in and over the lives of believers. We can see in the passage how Paul's focus has narrowed, from Jesus' supremacy over creation, to his supremacy over the church, and now the individual relationship between the believer and Jesus. Have a look at vv.21-23 with me...

21 Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour. 22 But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—23 if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

The depth of what Paul says in v21 is so hard-hitting isn't it. We were alienated, separated from God. But the wonderful message of grace... through Christ's body, through his physical death, we are reconciled, and are blameless, holy in his sight. How incredible is that?

The Christian faith isn't belief in fairies or anything wishy-washy – it's belief in the risen Lord Jesus; it's trusting his sacrifice on the cross as the only remedy for sin and it's the assurance of our right standing before God.

And because this is all because of what Jesus has done, he alone deserves supremacy in and over our lives.

- › Nothing else comes close. Money can't achieve it for us... career, our good works... nothing can achieve for us what Jesus has and so he alone is worth following in our lives.

How do we do that? Well that's the challenge set before us in v23 – to not move from the hope we have in the Gospel but to continue, firm in our faith, trusting in Jesus, our supreme sovereign Lord... not letting

the distractions of this world divert our attention, captivate our thoughts and rule our hearts but continue in the walk with Jesus each and every day.

- › At the start I asked why is following Jesus worth it? Why is the work of BCA worth it? Why is it worth being in ministry? Why is sharing and spreading the Gospel worth it? Well we've seen from our passage it's all worth it because Jesus is supreme... supreme over creation, supreme over the church, supreme over us.

How do we apply this passage?

Can I encourage you to have a quick read through the rest of Colossians; it's only short. Everything about our speech, our struggle with sin, how we live in relationship with one another comes under the supremacy of Christ.

For Caitlin and I, it's why we are serving with BCA in Gospel needy churches and communities. No matter how many Bible Studies where no-one shows up, or the fact that the family service that we launched last year didn't survive... the supremacy of Jesus makes it all worth continuing.

I've been so encouraged by what I've heard about all you have done and are doing here at KAC; so my encouragement to you is to keep going. Keep finding ways to share the Gospel with people, keep thinking of ways to reach out, keep growing in your knowledge and love of God.

It's not worthless, in fact it's the most worthwhile thing you can do. Jesus is supreme over creation, over the church and over us, so he alone is worth following.

Let me close in prayer.