

The Christ of Christmas

Colossians 1:15-20

It is my great joy to open up the Word of God to you again this morning and I would encourage you to take your Bibles and turn to Colossians chapter one. I believe the Spirit of God compels me to speak to you this morning about the Christ of Christmas.

The weight of this theme is staggering. It is infinitely beyond my ability to bear in my communication and beyond our ability to comprehend so I will trust the Holy Spirit to do his work in us all.

Before we look at the text, I would ask you to ponder with me: Who was this child named Jesus who was born some 2000 years ago, a name that is still known around the world? Who was this child that was born in utter obscurity to an ethnic group that were and continue to be the most despised people on the planet? A man who never promoted himself, yet changed the entire course of history. Who was this man that had no earthly possessions, didn't have a home, and for three years he wandered around in an area about 60 miles wide constantly telling people things they did not want to hear, exposing the sins in their heart as if he knew intimately every thought? Who was this man that was constantly attacking the elite, the educated, but especially the influential religious leaders, exposing their hypocrisy? Who was this man whose enemies admitted that he performed miracles? Who was this man who spent most of his time with the poor and the uneducated and the outcast, the social misfits, this man who chose uneducated and untrained and in many cases unwanted social misfits as his representatives?

This man that preached a message that was so offensive, so ridiculous that even his own countrymen cried for his blood, a man whose life impacted so many and yet so many were offended with all that he did and all that he said. Who was this man who was willing to die an ignominious and excruciating death on a Roman cross, condemned for crimes that he never committed? Who was this man whose birthday is still celebrated 2000 years later? In fact, his birth is the recognized division of the calendar era that we still have today?

Yet the vast majority of the world despises this man. The vast majority of the world refuses to even allow his name to be spoken or even in our country printed in a public place. A man whose birthday is celebrated by millions of people who spend billions of dollars on gifts and extravagant parties. Yet the very name of the honored person cannot be mentioned without bring offense at best or imprisonment at worst. Where children are not even allowed to sing about him at his birthday in celebrations in their school. Yet they can sing about Santa Claus and Rudolph the red nosed reindeer and Frosty the snowman and partridges in a pear tree and it is not even their birthday.

Does this strike you as odd, perhaps bizarre, maybe even supernaturally mysterious?

Who was this child that became a man, a man whose birthday millions celebrate, but whose origin they deny, whose life they despise and whose purpose they refuse to concede? Who was the Christ of Christmas?

Before his birth an angel appeared and said to the virgin that was about to conceive him:

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“Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end.”

And Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"

And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God.”¹

Likewise, the angel came to her husband and said:

“Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins.”

Now all this took place that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, "BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD, AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US."²

Dear friends, perhaps the most comprehensive answer to the question: Who was the Christ of Christmas? Who was that babe in the manger? Can be found in Colossians chapter one verses 15 through 20, a description that was penned by a Jewish rabbi who had a personal encounter with this Jesus, an encounter that utterly transformed his life forever.

Before us is an explanation of Jesus penned about 30 years after his death, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God.

Let me read this explanation to you, Colossians chapter one beginning in verse 15.

And He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created by Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the

¹ Luke 1:30-35.

² Mathew 1:20-23.

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dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything. For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.³

Beloved, the first recipients of these words were Christians in a first century church in a town called Colosse, a city in ancient Phrygia which was the Roman province there in Asia. It is part of modern day Turkey. It was founded by a man named Epaphras.

Now Colosse had a mixed population, a mixture of Jews and Gentiles. And both groups were a part of this church, people that had come to Christ for the most part and others who were just kind of hanging around. So both bringing into the church their own heretical baggage.

The Jews had their baggage of legalism. For example, they thought it was necessary that men be circumcised for salvation. They had the observance of ceremonial rituals of the Old Testament law, things like dietary laws and festivals and Sabbaths and all kinds of silly things that they had erected, all of which are enemies of grace. And they also had a very rigid form of asceticism which is a myriad of rules of self denial that they had concocted. And they also believed in the worship of angels and mystical experiences.

Now the Gentiles had their baggage as well. It was quite different. It was that of pagan mysticism. They loved philosophy. They loved to hear philosophers pontificate about the meaning of life. Where did we come from? Where are we going? Is there life after death? And so forth.

And all of this eventually gave birth to a philosophical system that we have heard of and known as Gnosticism and it flowed out of the Greek philosophy of that day known as Dualism where they believed that matter or anything physical was evil, but things that are of the spirit are good. They believed that God is good because he is spirit, but they had a very difficult time with God, meaning Jesus, becoming a man, material. That is evil. How could this possibly be?

So therefore they thought that Jesus was part of a number of emanations that had descended from God and that were ultimately less than God. And the Gnostics also believed that there was a secret higher knowledge that transcended Scripture, transcended the teaching of the apostles, some ascended knowledge that was necessary for salvation, a higher knowledge that was only available to certain elite individuals.

So with these competing religious convictions you can imagine the Church was a mess. Like so many today they were confused about the question: Who is Jesus and what should we do with him? The competing heresies in the church caused the pastor and

³ Colossians 1:15-20.

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found, Epaphras, to be very disturbed and so he makes a very long trip to Rome where he looks for the apostle Paul who by now is in prison to seek his counsel.

And, beloved, what we have before us this morning is an inspired letter the apostle Paul wrote to clarify these issues, primarily surrounding the deity of Jesus Christ and, thus, confronting the false teachers that had entered into the church. He wants them, according to chapter one in the middle of verse nine, to:

...be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.⁴

And he warns them in chapter two and verse eight. “See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.”⁵

So beginning here in verse 15 he cuts right to the very core of the issue and he reveals the supremacy of Jesus Christ over two categories that encompass the entirety of man’s existence. He describes, number one, his preeminence over creation and, number two, his preeminence over redemption.

This was probably a hymn or at least a common confession of the early Church. And, frankly, it is a literary jewel that refracts the full spectrum of light and the ineffable colors that would somehow portray the excellency and the majesty of Christ. Here God himself speaks through his servant Paul and defines the Christ who so many demand must be excluded from Christmas.

First of all, we see his preeminence over creation in verse 15. “And He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation.”⁶ Here we learn that the babe in the manger was God. It says, “He is the image,”⁷ in the original language the **EIKON** (i-kone’) meaning the likeness. Our English word icon is derived from this term which means representation, a symbol, a statue, a picture.

He is the likeness of God. Like the reflection of our image in a mirror, so, too, is the reflection of God in Jesus.

But it also carries the idea of manifestation, this icon, this image. He is the manifestation of God. In other words, the very nature and character and being of God are perfectly revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ. You will recall for this reason the apostle Paul said in

⁴ Colossians 1:9-10.

⁵ Colossians 2:8.

⁶ Colossians 1:15.

⁷ Ibid.

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2 Corinthians 4:6 that we have, “The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in...”⁸ what? “In the face of Christ.”⁹

Now as human beings we are also made in the image of God. Genesis 1:27 tells us that. And, in certain ways we bear resemblance of our Creator. Like him we have an intellect. We have a will. We have emotions and so forth. But because of Adam’s sin in the garden and the subsequent curse upon man, all of this has been greatly marred. The original image of God in man has been marred. We are not holy as he is. We are sinful. Moreover, unlike God we do not possess his incommunicable attributes. In other words, those attributes that God does not choose to share with us. We are not eternal. We are not unchangeable, omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent. We are none of these things.

But here the apostle is telling us that Christ Jesus is the perfect likeness and the perfect manifestation of God because he is God. That is the point. And he did not become the image of God when he came to earth, but rather he is the image of the invisible God. You see, in his incarnation, the invisible God became visible. That is the point, that we might behold our Creator. So this is Paul’s argument to the heretics in Colosse.

You will recall what the apostle John said in chapter one verse 14. “And we beheld his glory,”¹⁰ referring to Jesus, “glory as of the only begotten from the Father.”¹¹ And, again, here in Colossians chapter two and verse nine we read, “For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.”¹² And in verse three of chapter two. “In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”¹³

So, indeed, Christ is God made manifest. For this reason Jesus said, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father.”¹⁴ And in Hebrews chapter one and verse three you will recall the writer there tells us that He is, “the exact representation of His nature.”¹⁵ And in Philippians chapter two and verse six the apostle Paul tells us, “He existed in the form of God.”¹⁶ He goes on to say that he was equal to God because, indeed, he was God.

And, of course, this was Christ’s repeated claim while he was on earth. This was the consistent claim of the New Testament Scriptures, that Jesus was and is eternally God’s image from everlasting to everlasting. And because Jesus is God he is eternally the image of God, making him—according to verse 15—“The first-born of all creation.”¹⁷ The **PROTOKOS** (pro-tot-ok’-os) in the original language which means first in rank or position, the one to whom belongs the right and dignity of the first born in relation to

⁸ 2 Corinthians 4:6.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ John 1:14.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Colossians 2:9.

¹³ Colossians 2:3.

¹⁴ John 14:9.

¹⁵ Hebrews 1:3.

¹⁶ Philippians 2:6.

¹⁷ Colossians 1:15.

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every creature. He is the highly exalted one, the one above every creature. He is the heir and the ruler of all.

Now, please understand something here. This does not mean that he is the first created being in a long line of created beings like the Jehovah's Witnesses and other heretical cults would have us believe. But rather it means that he is the preeminent one. This is the whole force of this text. The writer of Hebrews tells us in chapter one beginning in verse two, "In these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power."¹⁸

Now, you will recall that in ancient days the first born son was accorded special rights and privileges that were not given to other siblings. The first born son was the father's heir and the manager of the household. And, of course, all of these things apply to the person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He is the eternal, preexistent God. He is the creator and the sustainer and the preeminent inheritor of all creation.

So in order to refute the central argument of those in Colosse, those heretics, Paul begins by affirming the deity of Jesus Christ. He was not some created being, some emanation from God in a long series of emanations. And then he continues to broaden the scope of the Lord's supremacy in verse 16. He says, "For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created by Him and for Him."¹⁹

Now here, again, Paul stresses Christ's preeminence above every creature. Regardless of whether they be material or spiritual, he created them. The grammatical construction here indicates that he is the creator of the invisible in the heavens as well as the visible on the earth. That pretty well covers it all, "whether thrones," he says, "or dominions or rulers or authorities."²⁰

This speaks of specific ranks of angelic beings. Thrones and dominions speak of throne spirits like the cherubim that dwell in the immediate presence of God and hover around his throne to do his bidding as well, he says, as rulers and authorities which are generally mentioned together in the New Testament Scripture and are believed to refer to a lesser rank of angels.

But Paul's point here is simply this. How ridiculous to worship angels who are subject to and who themselves worship Jesus Christ who created them. That is the point. Dear friends, this is the Christ of Christmas.

¹⁸ Hebrews 1:2-3.

¹⁹ Colossians 1:16.

²⁰ Ibid.

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And notice also that he is not only the divine agent of creation, but he is the very goal, the very purpose of creation. He says, “All things have been created by Him and for Him.”²¹

For example, we know that he created all of the angels to do his bidding, the ministering spirits of the saints. Angels were with him at the giving of the law at Sinai. There are so many examples. Michael has always been the protector of Israel. Gabriel, as we have read, was the one that announced the birth of the Savior at Bethlehem. We know that angels ministered to him in the Garden of Gethsemane. Angels stood watch over the empty tomb. We know that angels accompanied him as he ascended into glory and they will accompany him again when he returns. Even the rebellious fallen angels who oppose him and serve their master Satan were created by him and for him, ultimately to accomplish his glorious purposes in redemption.

He created heaven, all things. He created heaven as well for his abode, a place to display his glory to his perfected bride the Church. Did not Jesus promise in Matthew 25 that when he comes in his glory and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne and he will say to his own, “Come, you who are blessed of my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world?”²²

Moreover, because of his holiness, because he sovereignly rules over his creation with a government to accomplish his purposes, there must be a domain where sin will be punished. So Jesus also created hell, the eternal prison of Satan and his minions along with all men who have violated his law and refuse his mercy and his grace through Christ.

And John tells us that Christ Jesus is the eternal word and that he created the earth and everything that is in it.

You will recall in John one beginning in verse one:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.²³

And, of course, Jesus also created man for his eternal purposes.

Spurgeon put it so perfectly and I quote, “This creature, knowing evil and knowing good, strengthened by divine grace should of its own free will cling to the good and eschew the evil and should be forever God’s best ally against all revolt in his dominions. For this creature, though it had known evil, was to become a child of God and to be a partaker of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. These creatures created by him, partly spiritual and partly material were to have had at their

²¹ Ibid.

²² Matthew 25:34.

²³ John 1:1-3.

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head Christ Jesus who is to be the model of them all. And they were to be like him and to be his companions forever and to be to him more than companions, to be his friends with whom he might hold familiar intercourse and to be to him even more than friends, to be united to him in conjugal relationship, to be so completely one with him that they should be members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones, that his life should be their life and that their life should be derived from him,” end quote.

Oh, dear friends, this is the Christ of Christmas, the one who is preeminent over all creation.

And in verse 17 we read that he is before all things. That is, he is before all things in time and in rank. He is the preexistent forerunner. Did not Jesus tell us in his Revelation in chapter 22 and verse 13, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”²⁴ Indeed, he is infinitely above all things.

In Ephesians one verse 21 we read that he is above all rule and authority and power and dominion and every name that is named not only in this age, but also in the one to come. And the Spirit of God speaks to us, further, through the apostle Paul and says, “And in Him all things hold together.”²⁵ Literally it means that in him all things continue to cohere. You see, he is both the unifying principle and the personal sustainer of all that he has created.

Again, Hebrews chapter one verse three. “He... upholds all things by the Word of his power.”²⁶ Now, this is infinitely beyond our ability to grasp. This is staggering. We look around and we see this orderly system that is so incredibly complex and it all works together. It is not chaotic. There are inviolable, fixed laws of physics in the material universe that maintain the unity of all of these complex systems.

It is interesting that the slightest change in the rate of the earth’s rotation around the sun or the most minute change of angle on its axis would cause us to either burn or freeze. It has to be maintained perfectly. And physicists tell us that the slightest change in the mass of the proton would result in the dissolution of hydrogen atoms which would cause the entire universe to absolutely explode or, maybe I should say implode completely, to go into oblivion.

Physicists are still utterly baffled in their understanding of why the nucleus of the atom holds together. Eventually the one who holds the protons together will release them in final judgment and the nuclei of the atoms will fly apart.

According to 2 Peter three and verse 10 at that point, “The heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.”²⁷ And we know at that point he will create a new heaven and a new earth.

²⁴ Revelation 22:13.

²⁵ Colossians 1:17.

²⁶ Hebrews 1:3.

²⁷ 2 Peter 3:10.

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Perhaps you have heard of the Hadron collider. I read an article about this. I have been interested in it here recently. It has been on the news. This article is from the Associated Press and it says this and this is just an excerpt from it. "Scientists are preparing the world's largest atom smasher to explore the depths of matter after successfully restarting the \$10 billion machine following more than a year of repairs. The machine made another leap forward Monday by circulating beams of protons in opposite directions at the same time.

"New discoveries on the makeup of universe and its tiniest particles are unlikely before next year. The difficulties are going to come next year. The Large Hadron Collider has been advancing faster than expected in its startup phase that began Friday night, said Rolf Heuer, director-general of the European Organization for Nuclear Research. "Proton collisions could possibly begin within the next 10 days, officials said Monday. When the machine is fully operational, its magnets will control the beams of protons and send them in opposite directions through two parallel tubes the size of fire hoses."

"In rooms as large as cathedrals 300 feet under the Swiss-French border, the magnets will force them into huge detectors to record the reactions. Now catch this. Ultimately, the collider aims to create conditions like they were 1 trillionth to 2 trillionths of a second after the Big Bang - which scientists think marked the creation of the universe billions of years ago. Physicists also hope the collider will help them see and understand other suspected phenomena, such as dark matter, antimatter and supersymmetry," end quote.

Well, now how sad to watch man try to understand the physical universe while at the same time rejecting the one who created it, the one who sustains it, who does it all for his glory. They have rejected the Christ of Christmas.

We have seen his preeminence over creation. Secondly, the apostle Paul speaks of his preeminence over redemption in verse 18. We read, "He is also head of the body, the church."²⁸ Now here we see Christ's supremacy to his new creation, the Church where new creature in Christ are united together by grace through faith. This living organism he speaks of metaphorically as his body of which he is the head.

Now we know that even as the head of every man is Christ according to 1 Corinthians 11:3, he must therefore also be the head of the Church into which all believers have been immersed. The Church, the **EKKLESIA** (ek-klay-see'-ah) which means the congregation or the assembly, a term that embraces all of the redeemed people of God. The point here is he is the source of the church's life. He is the authority of the body. Like the human head is the authority of our body, Christ as our spiritual head provides for us life and growth and direction.

²⁸ Colossians 1:18.

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Think of the enormous diversity of all of us in here, all of the different gifts and preferences in our local body. And to think that somehow in Christ our head he creates unity out of diversity with all of these individual parts. It is amazing.

In verse 18 he goes on and says, “And he is the beginning,”²⁹ which means the origin, the source of the life of the Church. “He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead,”³⁰ meaning he was the first to be resurrected from the dead. Why? “So that He Himself might come to have first place in everything.”³¹ That is to say that he is preeminent and his preeminence might extend beyond the old creation and now to the new. His supremacy is universal. His triumphant resurrection, of course, guarantees ours and in this we rejoice.

Jesus said in John 14:19, “Because I live, you will live also.”³² Romans eight verse 29. He has authority over life and death and Paul said in 2 Timothy 1:10 it is, “our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”³³ Why did he do all of this? Well, Paul makes it clear here in this text at the end, verse 18. “So that He Himself might come to have first place in everything.”³⁴

And so Paul reinforces his point once again that Jesus is God. He is not some emanation from God. Again, this is the Christ of Christmas, the one who is to have first place in everything and yet he is still the one whom the world insists must not have first place in anything.

Paul goes on to add in verse 19, “For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him.”³⁵ Literally that God in all of his fullness would be in Christ, the totality of divine power and attributes are found in him. You see, again, he was not one of many spiritual beings that somehow emanated from God, possessing various powers and attributes as the Gnostic heretics taught. It says, “All of the fullness of deity dwells in him.”

The term “dwell” translates a verb that suggests a permanent, not some temporary residence. And we see here that it was all because of the Father’s good pleasure that all of the fullness of divinity should dwell in Christ. But it is interesting. Grammatically the verb rendered, “it was the Father’s good pleasure” is also linked to something else. Not only that all of the fullness of deity dwell in him, but also in verse 20, “And through Him to reconcile all things to Himself.”³⁶

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² John 14:19.

³³ 2 Timothy 1:10.

³⁴ Colossians 2:18.

³⁵ Colossians 2:19.

³⁶ Colossians 1:20.

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Now, here again, we see Christ's preeminence in redemption. To reconcile means to affect a thorough change back to a previous state. It means to bring restitution. It implies restitutions from a prior state from which one has fallen, a change from an enemy to a friend. This is one of several terms that is used in the New Testament to describe our salvation.

And Paul's inspired logic here is that not only are all things created by Christ, but all things are also reconciled through him.

And how did he accomplish this reconciliation? Verse 20. "Having made peace through the blood of His cross."³⁷ You see, keep in mind that sin ruined the original harmony between the creature and the Creator and between even creatures. But through Christ's shed blood on the cross the sin principle has been conquered. He is able to reconcile us unto himself. The wrath of God has been completely satisfied for all who believe. Peace with God is now possible.

For this reason Paul went on to add, "Through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven."³⁸ In other words, because of Christ and his judgment on sin, even the things in the world that remain evil will be brought to justice, all wickedness will be punished. Their power will be stripped.

Hendrickson put it so well and I quote, "Through Christ and his cross the universe is brought back or restored to its proper relationship to God in the sense that, as a just reward for his obedience Christ was exalted to the Father's right hand from which position of authority and power he rules the entire universe in the interest of the Church and to the glory of God," end quote.

Christ's reconciliation, his preeminence over redemption was promised to the angel or when the angel of the Lord suddenly stood before the shepherds. You will recall in Luke two and verse nine suddenly the glory of the Lord shown around them and they were terribly frightened. And, of course, this should be the rightful response when we stand in the presence of the shekinah glory of the holy God, a glory of holiness that exposes our sinfulness and our wretchedness.

And then we read that the angel said to them:

Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.³⁹

There has been born to you a Savior, a peace offering, one who will make atonement for sin, a propitiation, the one who can satisfy the wrath of God. Good news God has provided a way of reconciliation through Christ.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Luke 2:10-11.

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Dear friends, this is the Christ of Christmas. And you will recall that the sky was then filled with the myriad of angels and they said there in Luke two verse 13, “multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.’”⁴⁰

And many people misinterpret this text. Many take the King James too literally where it says, “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.”⁴¹ And you see all these yard decorations that say, “Peace on earth,” which to many people means the absence of conflict. Let’s have an end to war here and let’s just all get along and let’s relax and enjoy tranquility. And that is typical of our naïve and theologically illiterate culture.

But rather what he is saying here is, “Because of sin we were enemies of God in need of reconciliation which only Christ Jesus can provide. And then and only then can man be at peace with God.” That is the point. Remember in John 3:36 the wrath of God abides on unbelievers. Paul tells us in Romans 5:10 that we were enemies of God. In Colossians 1:21 that we were once alienated and enemies of God. So the angels are saying, “Glory to God in the highest,”⁴² because he has provided a way of reconciliation. That is what Paul was telling us here in Colossians one.

Back to Luke two as we close this morning where it says, “On earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.”⁴³ Again, some versions translate it “good will toward men.”⁴⁴

And you see this a lot of times on Christmas cards as well naïvely thinking that what we need to do here at Christmas time is just, you know, show goodwill to men. That is what this is all about, some sentimental version of do unto others as you would have them do unto you. And other assume when he says, “With whom He is pleased,”⁴⁵ refers to salvation through works. None of that is true.

Literally what he is saying is the way we have it in the New American Standard, “Peace among men of his good pleasure.” The angels are saying, “Glory be to God in the highest.”⁴⁶ Those who are the sovereignly chosen recipients of his grace, purely because of his good pleasure now we can have peace with God because of Christ and all who have received the gift of salvation receive that solely on the basis of his good pleasure.

Beloved, this was the theology that evoked such praise from the angels. Oh, dear Christian, how can we the undeserved recipient of such love do anything less than what the angels did? Those who will not even experience such grace.

⁴⁰ Luke 2:13-14.

⁴¹ Luke 2:14.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Luke 2:14.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Luke 2:14.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

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Who is the Christ of Christmas? He is the one who is preeminent over creation. He is the one who is preeminent over redemption. And may we join the angels this Christmas season and say, “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased”?⁴⁷

That is the sentiment that was captured so perfectly by the hymnist when he wrote:

Angels from the realms of glory
Wing your downward flight to earth.
Ye who sing creation’s story,
Now proclaim Messiah’s birth.

Come and worship,
Come and worship,
Worship Christ the newborn King.

Let’s pray together.

Father, thank you for these eternal truths. May they bear much fruit in our lives we ask in Jesus’ name and for his glorious sake. Amen.

Transcript Explanation: Each transcript is a rough approximation of the message preached and may occasionally misstate certain portions of the sermon and even misspell certain words. It should in no way be considered an edited document ready for print. Moreover, as in any transcription of the spoken word, the full intention and passion of the speaker cannot be fully captured and will in no way reflect the same style of a written document.

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⁴⁷ Ibid.