

Sermon on Colossians 1:15–29

There are few passages in the New Testament that lift us so high and so quickly as Colossians 1:15–29. Paul has barely finished his prayer for the Colossian Christians when he launches into one of the most profound hymns in all of Scripture—words that catch our breath with their grandeur and their glory.

“He is the image of the invisible God,” Paul writes. “The firstborn over all creation.”

You can almost hear the choir behind these words. And yet, as majestic as they are, Paul isn’t simply composing theological poetry for its own sake. This isn’t some abstract essay on Christology. It’s deeply pastoral. It’s personal. Because the Colossians—like us—were being tempted to look elsewhere for fullness, for wisdom, for spiritual vitality. Paul’s response is to paint a picture of Christ so compelling, so overwhelming, that everything else fades into shadow.

So, let’s follow Paul as he leads us to the centre of the Christian faith. We’ll look at this text under three headings:

- 1. Christ Above All**
- 2. Christ In You**
- 3. Christ Working Through You**

1. Christ Above All (vv.15–20)

“He is the image of the invisible God...”

Right from the start, Paul is pushing back against a very human tendency—to reduce Jesus. To think of him as one among many spiritual guides. Maybe the best, maybe the most loving, but not necessarily the *only* one. In Colossae, false teachers were promoting a kind of spiritual hierarchy: Jesus, yes—but also angels, mystical experiences, rules and rituals. Jesus as the starting point, not the whole story.

Paul says: *No. Christ is not part of the story. He is the whole story.*

“He is the image of the invisible God.” Not just a reflection or a representative. The Greek word *eikōn* means exact likeness. In other words, if you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus. We don't have to guess or grope in the dark. God has shown his face.

Then Paul piles on the language:

“Firstborn over all creation” – not meaning that Jesus was created, but that he is supreme over creation.

“For by him all things were created...” – not just a spiritual realm, but the everyday stuff: trees and mountains, oceans and galaxies.

“All things were created *through* him and *for* him.” That’s the purpose of everything: to glorify Christ.

It’s worth pausing here. Because this isn’t just a theological truth—it’s a deeply *personal* one.

Think about your life: your relationships, your work, your body, your time. According to Paul, *all of it* finds its meaning in Christ. We often try to fit Jesus into the corners of our lives—quiet time here, Sunday worship there. But Paul flips the script: *our lives* fit into *his* story. Not the other way around.

Christ is not your assistant. He is not your consultant. He is Lord.

And yet, he is also our peacemaker. Verse 20:

“...and through him to reconcile to himself all things... making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.”

The One who made the universe became part of it, was broken by it, to redeem it. Creation didn't just need a tune-up—it needed a rescue. And Christ made peace *not by waving a wand*, but by *shedding his blood*.

2. Christ In You (vv.21–27)

Now Paul turns from the cosmic to the personal.

“Once you were alienated from God... but now he has reconciled you...”

Again, Paul refuses to gloss over the truth. He says we were *alienated*. Not just disinterested. Not just “on a journey.” We were enemies in our minds. That’s confronting—but it’s also freeing. Because if we’re honest, we all know there’s a distance between the people we want to be and the people we are. Between the love we long to give and the selfishness we fall into.

But Paul doesn't leave us there.

“He has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight.”

What a phrase: *holy in his sight*. Not half-fixed. Not probationary. But made new.

But then Paul adds something that can sound jarring:
“*If* you continue in your faith...”

Wait—*if*? Does that mean our salvation is in doubt?

Not quite. Paul isn’t introducing fear. He’s inviting *faithfulness*. Continuing in the faith doesn’t mean never struggling. It means not *shifting* from the hope held out in the gospel. The danger Paul is confronting is not moral failure—it’s theological drift. Taking your eyes off Christ and looking for “more.”

But there is no “more” than Christ. Which leads us to one of the most astonishing phrases in all of Paul’s writing:

“Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

Think about that. The same Christ who holds the galaxies together is *in you*. Not just near you. Not just available on request. *In you*. That’s the hope we hold—not a vague wish for heaven, but the living presence of Christ in our lives, transforming us from the inside out.

This means you are never alone. Never beyond hope. Never stuck.

When you face a tough meeting, a hospital room, a sleepless night—Christ is in you. Not just for the spiritual elite. For *you*. Your hope of glory.

3. Christ Working Through You (vv.28–29)

Paul closes this section with a word about his own ministry—and in doing so, gives us a pattern for our own.

“We proclaim him,” Paul says, “admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.”

Dick Lucas, in *Fullness and Freedom*, points out that maturity in Christ is not about spiritual fireworks. It's not about having the most impressive spiritual experiences. It's about *growing up*. It's about becoming more like Christ: more loving, more patient, more courageous, more humble.

And how does that happen?

By *proclaiming Christ*. That's the centre. Not programs or performances. Not perfect parenting or Bible trivia. But Christ himself—taught, trusted, treasured.

Paul is labouring, he says, “with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.”

That's a beautiful paradox. Paul works *hard*—but it's *Christ's* energy that fuels him. This is not self-help. This is *Spirit-help*. The same Christ who is above all and in you is also working through you.

So let's make it practical.

- If you're a parent struggling to raise kids in a confusing world—Christ is in you, working through you.
- If you're facing exhaustion in your job or your care responsibilities—Christ is in you, supplying strength.
- If you feel inadequate in your witness, unsure what to say to a friend who's curious about faith—Christ is in you, giving words and courage.

- If you are overwhelmed by the brokenness around you—take heart. Christ is above it all, and he is reconciling all things to himself.

When we look at our lives, it's easy to feel scattered. We wear a dozen hats: employee, spouse, parent, friend, volunteer, neighbour. We face decisions, doubts, disappointments. It can feel like life is pulling us in every direction.

Colossians 1 invites us to do one thing: **Fix our eyes on Christ.**

Not as a piece of our lives, but as the **centre** of it.

Dick Lucas put it this way: "The Christian life is not to be lived on some mystical plane. The true Christian experience is grounded in the knowledge of Christ as he has been revealed in the gospel."

So friends, let's not settle for a small Jesus. Let's not treat him like a life coach or a religious mascot. He is the image of the invisible God. The firstborn over all creation. The head of the body. The reconciler of all things. The Christ who is *in you*. The one who works *through you*.

Let us proclaim him. Let us grow in him. Let us trust him for all things.

Amen