

Sermon preached by Vicar Nathan on Colossians 1:15-23 at Victory of the Lamb on January 11, 2015.

Series: Profile

Today's Focus: Profile: Jesus

Theme: "Who is Jesus?"

Let's pray: Lord, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts always be pleasing in your sight, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Jesus did not exist. Jesus is just a figment of your imagination. Jesus was just a good person. Jesus was born of a human father and mother, and he lived for 33 years, and the Romans executed him by crucifying him because of all the trouble he was causing in Jerusalem and Israel, and although Jesus' teachings live on, his execution was the end of him. Jesus just taught people to be nice and "love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus was just a great example to show us how we should love people. It is true that he treated people with a lot of love and care, and he changed the way many people thought. He had god-like powers to do miracles, and many people followed Jesus around to listen to him teach. But Jesus was *not* God. Jesus did not rise from the dead. That would be impossible. Jesus was just a great man.

Well, did I get your attention? Should I keep going saying things like that, or should I stop? Statements like those are all around us in the world. And not just out in the world—but *people* say those things. Maybe a person—or lots of people—that you know have said one or more of those things to you. The point is—many people don't know who Jesus is.

So who is Jesus? We're now in the second week of our "*Profile*," in which we are working through the book of Colossians. Last week Pastor Ben finished by telling us the most important part of our profile—the most important part of *who we are*. He said the most important thing is *whose* we are. "We are God's. We are God's holy people whom God delights to love! All because of Jesus." This week we are going to pick up right where we left off last week. We are God's all because of Jesus. So **Who Is Jesus?** As we study Colossians 1:15-23, we are going to see that Jesus is **The One Who is the Supreme Ruler of All Things** and also **The One Who Reconciled You**.

Paul writes in verses 15-20: "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.** 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.**"

If Jesus had a profile on a social media site, what would he put in the "About Me" section? The 6 verses we just read tell us that one description of Jesus in his profile would read, "The Supreme Ruler of All Things." And there would be six subpoints that explain what that means.

1. Jesus is true God. Verse 15 says that Jesus is "**The image of the invisible God.**" What does that mean? Try as you might, no one can describe what God looks like—the Bible says he is a spirit and invisible. So is Jesus an image—a picture—of what God looks like? In a way, yes, because when Jesus lived on earth people obviously saw what he looked like. But that word "image" means so much more. "Image" means that Jesus doesn't just look like God, doesn't just act like God, doesn't just represent God. Image means Jesus *is* God.

2. Next: **“The firstborn over all creation.”** To be the firstborn had a much greater meaning and importance in Old Testament and Jewish culture than it does today. I am the firstborn in my family—I’m the oldest of 5 kids—and what does that mean? Doesn’t mean I’m more important or than any of my siblings. Doesn’t mean my parents love me the most. It just means I’m the oldest. But here it means much more and something much different. In that day the firstborn was intrinsically more important than every other sibling. The firstborn received a double portion of inheritance—twice as much as every other child. Firstborn has to do with rank. And Jesus outranks everything in creation. He is ruler over everything in creation.
3. Why is Christ ruler over absolutely everything? Verse 16 explains: **“In him all things were created.”** Jesus was there at the creation of the world! Jesus was not created by God—Jesus *is* God and has been God since before the world was created—things in the heavens and things on earth. Things we can see and things we can’t. Every sort of ruler and kingdom and person or country in authority. Jesus has been God since before everything in the whole universe was created. There was never a time when Jesus wasn’t God—Jesus has been God since *forever*.
4. Paul just keeps piling on the grand descriptions of Jesus: **“He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”** Not only is Jesus true God, who created the world, but Jesus is still preserving the world. Jesus existed before the creation of the world, yes, but he is also before all things in the sense that a king is before his people. Jesus is on his throne, looking out over all that is his—namely, everything in the universe—and it keeps running because of him. If Jesus wanted to stop the earth’s rotation and it’s orbit around the sun so that it were always daytime here and always night on the other side of the world and always dawn or dusk in between, he could. If he wanted to make it so that it were 75 degrees in Wisconsin right now, and minus 17 in Florida and Arizona, he could! The universe is not ruled by chance or by fate or by some Star Wars-esque “force”—the universe is ruled by Jesus, who is true God.
5. Jesus is also **“the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead.”** Paul describes the church—all believers who have ever lived and who will ever live on the earth as a body with Jesus as the head. And no body can exist without its head. Without getting too morbid—if a body doesn’t have a head it will die. Simple as that. In the same way, there would be no Church—no Christians—without Jesus. And the fact that Jesus is the firstborn from the dead—the fact that Jesus rose from the dead—*guarantees* that Jesus has power over death as well!
6. Paul sums up his great description and declaration of Jesus as the ruler of all things by saying that **“in everything Jesus has the supremacy, for God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him (Jesus).”** Jesus is truly the supreme ruler of all things—the fullness of God is in him! Not just parts of God. Jesus isn’t like Hercules—only part God. Jesus is completely 100% God, and he rules supreme over absolutely everything. If you look at verses 15-18, you will see a form of the word “all” 6 times! Firstborn over **all creation**...in him **all things** were created...**all things** have been created through him and for him...he is before **all things**...in him **all things** hold together...**in everything** he might have the supremacy.

Paul has firmly established in those first 6 verses of our lesson that Jesus truly is the supreme ruler over all things and everyone in the universe, and now in verses 21-23 he speaks to the Colossians and to you and to me very directly. Paul switches from talking about everything in the whole universe to talking about you and what Jesus’ relationship is with you. I could sum up these three verses by simply saying they is the story of us—your story and story—past, present, and future. The past is verse 21. **“Once you**

were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.” Do you recognize the seriousness of that? You and I were both enemies of God! With every thought of our mind and all of our behavior we were vehemently fighting against God for at least some of our life! We were alienated from God—we were separated from him. We were not part of his family. We did not love God. There was no peace between us and God—not because he didn’t want peace, but because we didn’t want it. We wanted nothing to do with God. Being God’s enemy and separating yourself from him is a terrible place to be, because if you are God’s enemy at the end of your life or at the end of the world (whichever comes sooner), then you will be God’s enemy for all eternity, with all the other enemies of God, suffering in hell. That’s the first part of our story—and thankfully it was totally in the past.

Verse 22 actually encompasses past *and* present *and* future, and after the dark picture painted in verse 21, the first two words completely turn the tables. “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.**” Through Jesus’ death; through the blood he shed on the cross, our relationship with God has been reconciled—it has been repaired! You and I both, who had dug our heels in and were determined to be God’s enemies forever, as since Adam and Eve sinned every human being wants to be by nature—Jesus changed us from being enemies of God’s! We didn’t stop wanting to be enemies, we didn’t go and try to find God—God loved us so much that he took his firstborn son—his only son—Jesus—and had him die. So now, we are without any blemish of sin. When the devil goes to God and says accusingly, “Look at those people at Victory of the Lamb—look at Jim, Linda, Chuck, Nathan, Pam...they are all terrible people! They sin every single day! They do things directly against what you’ve told them, God!” When the devil does that, Jesus steps up and says, “No—they are all free from any accusations! Rachel, Doug, Nissa, Aaron...all of them are perfect! I paid for their sins when I died! Satan—you can never accuse them again. Their future is set—they have a home all prepared in heaven.” Jesus has defended you in the past, in the present, and he will keep on standing up for you your whole life. He has reconciled you.

Paul concluded this section of his letter with an encouragement based on everything he had just told the Colossians. “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.**” My friends, Jesus is the supreme ruler of all things—absolutely everything in the universe—past, present, and future. He is true God! And he also repaired your relationship—he reconciled you with God. He died so that you are free from every accusation of sin. So continue in your faith! Don’t move away from the gospel. Live firmly entrenched as a servant of the gospel, living with the sure and certain hope that your story is completed—past, present, and future—because of who Jesus is. Amen.