

**Sermon 31<sup>st</sup> May 2009** (Colossians 3:1-11) “Pentecost”

“Just look at this Jesus”

If there was one phrase that could summarise the first half of Paul’s letter to the Colossians, that might be this.

“You’ve heard of Jesus;  
You’ve believed in Jesus  
You’ve learned about Jesus  
You sing about him every week, and you pray in his name.  
But will you just stop of a moment, and just look at this Jesus?”

And like the 98 foot statue of Christ that towers of Rio de Janiero, this enormous vision of Jesus comes into view.

To remind ourselves of what Paul wrote in the opening of the letter ( in 1:15-20)

*<sup>15</sup>He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; <sup>16</sup>for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup>He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup>He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. <sup>19</sup>For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, <sup>20</sup>and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.”*

He is the image of the invisible God  
By looking at him, you understand God  
And by looking at him, you understand everything that God has made  
Because he is the co-creator, in whom every aspect of life makes sense

And if there are things in life that don’t make sense,  
If there is wrong in the world that seems ungodly,  
If there is pain, and suffering, and sin and godlessness,  
If there is corruption amongst the powerful  
If there is suffering among the powerless  
then, all things are to be reconciled in Jesus  
that is **all** things  
not just **some** things.  
Jesus is God’s agent for the renewal of the whole cosmos,  
for all of creation is to be put back into order in him.

And, says Paul, Jesus fills everything,  
because the fullness of God is in him  
and therefore he should fill you.

He should fill not just your religious life,  
not just your church,  
not just your prayers,  
but every aspect of your living.

And that is why all the other stuff, all the other priorities, all the other philosophies  
and reasoning and rules and wisdom, that life might offer us – all these other things  
are useless.

Because you don't need self help books, you don't need the values of the world, you don't well-meaning religious principles, to give structure to your lives.  
All you need is Jesus Christ.

And so, at the beginning of the third chapter,  
Paul says "If you have been raised with Christ"  
"If you have shared in his resurrection power"  
"If this reconciliation with God, through Jesus, has touched you and transformed you"  
"If you are a Christian"  
- then set your minds on Christ, who is seated at the right hand of God.  
Focus on him.  
Focus on his victory.  
Focus on his will,  
because he is reigning on high, and in him is the key to who you are in God.

Verse 2, "Set your minds on things above, not on things of the earth for you have died – and your life is now hidden with Christ in God."

You are secure in him.  
You are hidden in him.  
And one day, when he returns, it will be seen by everyone just who you are in him.

The Daily Planet, in Metropolis, has a reporter.  
His name is Clark Kent, he's from a small town in Kansas, and he's a bit of a klutz.  
But Clerk Kent actually has a secret identity – he's Superman.  
He was born Kal-El on the plant Krypton.

But actually, it isn't really that Clark has a secret identity – as if he played the part of superman in his spare time.  
He *is* Superman. He *is* from Krypton.  
If there's something unreal here, it is Clark Kent.  
The dippy journalist is actually the fake persona.

And that's what Paul is saying here.  
Don't forget your real identity.  
Don't forget your real destiny.  
You have died with Christ to the old  
and you have risen as something new  
and that is who you are.

"Just look at this Jesus"  
and now  
"Keep looking at him, and then look and see who you are in him"

Well, OK.  
You might say to me.  
"This is great theology -  
This is inspiring stuff"  
But, I suppose we might ask – "what difference does it make?"

"Lovely words for Church  
Lovely thoughts for prayer  
this might be quite inspirational.  
But Paul, surely we can't be expected to walk about with our heads in the clouds thinking about Jesus all the time?  
We'd never get anything done"

“How does this help us live out our lives, raise our kids, do our jobs, run our churches, look after our parents, get on with our neighbours?”

Well, actually, it helps in every way imaginable.

Because this Jesus, whom we are to set our minds upon is the reason for our lives.

He is not just for our worship, but for our bodies, our families, our relationships, our sexuality, and his “reconciling all things to himself” means **all** things – every aspect of life.

Look at chapter three.

Verses 1-4 says “seek things above” and “set our minds on Christ”.

But then, verses 5-11 – speak about the type of people we should be: not immoral, not driven by desires, not greedy, not twisted by anger, not gossips, not false and pretend, but Christ like.

Then verses 12-17 speak about how we should related to each other in the church – how we should forgive, and love and worship, and encourage and rebuke.

And then finally verses 18-25 deal with our social relationships marriages, parents, children, masters (employers), basic economic relationships that make up society.

All of these things are to be shaped by what God has done in Jesus and who he has made us in Jesus.

We’ll look at 12-17 on church relationships, and 18-25 on other relationships, over the next two weeks.

But, for now, a few words about verses 5-11 – which centre on who we should be.

Let me begin by telling you a story: a story Max Lucado tells about Bob:

Bob was born in the land of coats.

His mother loved blue and made Bob's first coat blue.

Every time Bob wore his blue coat, she cheered, "Yes, Bob!"

He felt good in his blue coat, but Bob had to grow up and go to work. So he put on his best blue coat and went his new job. The people on the street saw him and yelled, "Yuk, Yuk!" Their coats were yellow and they hated blue.

So Bob bought a yellow coat, put it over his blue coat, and continued on his way to work. The people cheered, "Yes! Bob!" Bob felt good in his yellow coat over his blue coat.

But when he stepped into his boss’s office, his boss looked at him and said, "Yuk!" So Bob jumped up, took off the yellow coat and stood waiting for approval in his blue coat. The boss yelled, "Double Yuk! Bob. Here at work we wear green coats!" So Bob put the yellow coat, over the blue coat, and put a green coat on top. "Yes Bob!" said the boss, and Bob felt good.

After work, Bob slipped off the green coat, put it under the yellow coat and walked proudly home. But when he opened the door, his mother met him with "Yuk". So Bob quickly changed coats, putting blue one on top. Mum whispered, "Yes Bob!"

Bob got so good at changing coats that he became a popular man around town. He changed coats so quickly until he had folks fooled into believing that whatever coat they had on, he had it on too. Bob loved hearing the crowd say, "Yes Bob!" He couldn't stand hearing "Yuk"

And Bob was elected mayor of the Town of Coats.

But one day the Yellow Coats brought in a man wearing no coat. "Kill him!" they cried, "he doesn't fit in!" In his yellow coat, Bob said, "Leave him to me."

"Man, where is your coat?" he asked. The man said, "I wear no coat." Bob said, "Everybody wears a coat. What colour do you want?" The man responded the second time, "I wear no coat." By then the Green Coats had gathered under Bob's window. Running to the window, his green coat on top, Bob yelled down to them, "I have it under control." The Green Coats shouted, "Kill him!" At this time his mother entered into the room, and Bob slipped his blue coat on top. "Bob, where is his blue coat?" Mother asked, The Man replied, "I don't wear a coat." "Kill him," said Mother as she left Bob and the man alone.

"Man, said Bob, you have to wear a coat or they are going to kill you." "Bob," said the man, "you need to decide to stop wearing your different coats. Take them off, take them all off and let the world see who you truly are." "Take them off? Take them all off?" asked an incredulous Bob. The man said again, "Bob, you have to make a choice." As the crowd kept crying, "Kill him!" Bob washed his hands, opened the door and marched the man toward sure death. The man looked at Bob, with one final word, "Choose." Bob was left alone with his three coats and the questions ringing in his mind, "Take them off? Take them all off?"

But you see that is what Paul calls us to do.

Verse 5 – put to death whatever in you is earthly  
take off immorality, take off the impurity  
get rid of the greed – which is idolatry,  
the materialism  
all the things that are off the old world that is not reconciled to God.

Verse 8 – strip off, anger, and wrath, and slander and abuse - all the ways we misuse our mouth.

Verse 9 – And do not lie to each other

And we might say “we don’t tell lies!”

But then, this speaks of lies *to each other*.

So every time we tell people we are fine, when we are not – we lie.

Every time we pretend to other Christians that we are coping, when we are not – we lie.

Every time we put on a mask, or we put on a false coat to keep in with people – we lie.

And so, all pretence, all insincerity, all the layers we put on to make us look like something we are not, it all needs to come off.

“Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourself in the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of the creator”

A fantastic thought.

Like superman, we are to strip off the false Clark Kent persona - the lie that lets us fit in with the world.

Off it comes, so we can be who we are supposed to be – a people renewed in the image of the creator.

You are being renewed in the image of your creator.

What does that look like?

Well, Jesus is the image of the creator.  
“he is the image of the invisible God” (1:15)  
So, it means we are to be renewed that we might look like Jesus.

Scary?

But it is even more wonderful than that.  
Because Genesis tells us, that human beings were originally created in the image of God.  
So we are being renewed to be the human beings that we were designed to be.

When the Holy Spirit fell on the at Pentecost  
all sorts of weird and wonderful things happened:  
tongues of fire and spiritual gifts.  
But the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus  
and his primary purpose is to make us like Jesus  
and it is the same Spirit that was there at Creation:  
the breath of God that was breathed into men and women.  
The Spirit of God that makes humanity live, and be different from the animals.  
And so he comes again at Pentecost,  
that a debased humanity  
might be made fully human once again.

You see, it isn't just about a moral transformation of the individual.  
No, God is reconciling *all things* to himself.

Verse 11, “In this renewal, there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free, but Christ is all and in all.”

All things, and all people, being reconciled to God.

As the Holy Spirit falls on the believers at Pentecost,  
He falls that we might be holy  
that we might strip off the old and be renewed  
that we exhibit the fruits of the Spirit.

But he also comes to drive us out to the world,  
that we might be the agents of God's reconciliation of all things  
that we might bring renewal  
that we point to what God can and is doing in human lives  
that our lives might shine in such a way that says:

“Just look at the size of this Jesus”

Amen