

# EEN

## Sermon Starter: February 2018

### “Christ the Creator”

Scriptures: John 1:1-18; 1 Cor. 8:6; Heb. 1:1-3; Col. 1:15-20

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men” (Jn 1:1-4).

This passage begins the story of a love affair, of unrequited love in many respects. It is also a retelling of an older version of the story, and further reveals one of the central characters. That older version of the story began: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ...” This one starts with: “In the beginning was the Word ...”.

It is probably no coincidence that these accounts start the same way. When early Christians began to fully comprehend who Jesus was, they must have asked themselves, “How do we understand how everything came into existence in light of the coming of the Son of God?” The astonishing answer is “through Him” (Jn 1:3, 10).

Christ created the Universe. Let that sink in a bit.

But another question tumbles out: “How is this possible?” For that, John pushes us back, back before time and space, back before the beginning as it was described in Genesis. For there the “beginning” is when God created all of existence. John says, before that beginning “the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Not a demi-god. Not a “son” who is in some way less than God the Father. Plain and simple: the Word was God; the Word is God, the same as or coequal with God the Father. As Jesus will later say, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (Jn 14:9). It is this same Word that “became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (Jn 1:14). Or more literally, in keeping with the nomadic history of the Israelites, Christ “pitched his tent among us.” God not only became a human being, he sought to join us, be one of us in the sense of belonging. “Hey, can I pitch my tent with you folks?” The Creator came, but “the world did not recognize him.” Even his own people “did not receive him.” “Can I pitch my tent with you?” “No!”

Yet a few did receive him and “beheld his glory” –meaning they understood Him to be the Son of God through whom the Universe came into existence. And for those who accepted Him for who He was, “he gave them the right to become children of God” (v. 12).

Nearly 2,000 years later many people, including many Christians, do not understand that the Creator of the Universe is the same Jesus of Nazareth. Yet it is precisely because the Word, the preexistent Son of God, was with the Father and the Holy Spirit in the beginning, indeed, before “the beginning,” it is precisely because the Word was God, that the entire Universe can come into existence “through Him.” Thus, it is the Second Person of the Trinity, the Word, the preexistent Son of God, who is the One through whom the Triune God creates the Universe. Simply put, Christ is the Creator of all things. Christ is the Creator. So because the Word became flesh and modestly, humbly, quietly pitched his tent among ours, we can therefore say: In the beginning Christ “created the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1).

Christ is the Creator — really? This seems so radical, so frankly unbelievable. Maybe it’s a typo. Maybe an overzealous scribe somewhere along the way inserted this into the text of John’s Gospel. Maybe this is too momentous a belief to hang on a few words in one text.

And yet the New Testament proclaims that Christ is the Creator in several other instances from the early Christian communities of the first century who wrote and preserved the New Testament.

The Apostle Paul puts it succinctly: “Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live” (1 Cor 8:6, emphasis added). All things come from the Father but through the Son, Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 1:2 proclaims the same belief: “in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the Universe” (emphasis added).

But it is an incredible text in Colossians, specifically 1:15-20, that I want to introduce now: “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 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. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 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.”

In prison in the late 50s or early 60s Paul writes to the Colossians, whom he had never met, to correct ideas perpetrated by false teachers. These false teachings were causing trouble within the church. Paul comforts and strengthens them with the truth about who Christ actually is. He does so by quoting familiar teachings to the Colossians, especially our current text, 1:15-20. It is an early summary of the Christian faith, accepted by the Colossians, and quoted by Paul to help them understand how wrong the false teachers were and how they don’t need to follow their false practices.

In effect, Paul is saying, “Look, you’ve been led astray by these guys from the Christian teachings that you yourselves know as the truth. The church accepts these teachings and passes them on to you and me. Let me remind you of what you already have professed.”

While we don’t have the complete picture of the false teaching Paul is refuting, its proponents appear to have claimed some type of secret knowledge about angels and “the elemental spirits of the Universe” (2:8, 20). They claimed these supernatural powers were in fact the ones in charge and were to be appeased by various ritualistic acts (2:16, 20-23). They taught Christ’s death provided for the forgiveness of sins, but humans must still appease these supernatural beings –or so this false teaching apparently went.

To refute these false ideas Paul quotes this early summary of Christian faith that the Colossians themselves had affirmed to remind them that Christ has “supremacy” in all things (1:18). This text proclaimed to the Colossians, and now to us, that Christ is the Creator, and because He is the Creator He reigns. Christ has supremacy in all things, in all areas. He exists before all things, holds all things together, is the head of the Body (the Church) and He is the first one to be raised from the dead to show what our future resurrection bodies will be like. All of this makes Him the LORD of all that exists. Christ the Creator reigns. Thus, there is no need for the Colossians to have some type of syncretism where Christ as redeemer is combined with beliefs and rituals appeasing other powers, because the whole cosmos is subject to Christ.

There are many mind-blowing aspects to our Colossians text, but the next affirmation I want to lift up really can turn things upside down –or rather, right side up.

The end of verse 16 says, “All things were created by Him and for Him.” We’ve already seen that Christ created all things. But we also see that all things were created for Christ. Hebrews 1:2 suggests the same thing when it proclaims that Christ is “heir of all things.”

When a person creates something in our society they own it. Because Christ is the Creator, He is therefore the owner. However, we hear often the idea that it was created for us. There are even many Christian leaders who fall into this type of thinking. But it puts us in the place of the LORD, one of the greatest spiritual mistakes we can make. It puts us at the center, instead of Christ.

Now I used “it” intentionally, because that is how we think about what we own: as an it. And when something (or someone) is an it, we can do with it what we please –or so we think. But not if it belongs to the LORD! “The Earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof,” proclaims Psalm 24:1 (KJV). “The land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants,” declares Leviticus 25:23. In Jesus’ parable of the tenants, found in all three synoptic Gospels, the tenants say, “This is the heir, let us kill him and the inheritance will be ours” (Mt 21:33-46; Mk 12:1-12; Lk 20:9-16, emphasis added).

But do we not slip into a version of this? “Let us kill the Lordship of Christ in our hearts, and all things will be ours. We will turn everything into an it to do with it what we please!” The Heir was of course killed. But our Colossians passage helps us understand that even Christ’s death

does not obviate who He is –in fact, it reinforces it. His death and his subsequent resurrection, making him “first-born among the dead,” actually reveals who He really is –the Creator, the One through which and for which all of existence was made. Killing the Heir utterly failed. It only reveals Jesus to be Christ the Creator, the One to whom all of creation belongs –including you and me.

But somewhere along the way many Christians lost sight of the fact that Christ is the Heir. Is it because we have focused too exclusively on the fact that Christ is our Savior who provides for the forgiveness of our sins? This brings us back to one of the problems the Colossians were apparently having, that Christ provides for the forgiveness of sins but that other principalities and powers need to be appeased. It is one of the reasons why Paul reminds them what they have confessed about Christ: He is the Creator Who Reigns over all and to whom all of Creation belongs. He is indeed our Savior –but He is much more. Who has Creation been made for? It has been made for Him. It belongs to Him.

### Discussion Questions

- Have you ever heard that Christ is the Creator? If not, why do you think that’s the case? How does this idea sit with you? Are you comfortable with this idea? Do you believe it? Does it excite you? Make you glad?
- Are we any different from the Colossians in that we have confessed Christ to be our LORD and yet we appease all kinds of “principalities and powers?” We allow him to provide for the forgiveness of our sins, sure, but is He LORD of our lives? Will we allow Him to be LORD when it comes to overcoming climate change?
- When is the last time you heard this idea, “All things were created for Christ”? What are the implications for us that all things belong to Christ?