
Jesus Over Everything

Victory Life Church

Sunday, November 8, 2020 — A Kingdom Community

Introduction

We are concluding a series looking at how Jesus is over everything, the major emphasis in the New Testament letter to the Colossians.

Jesus is supreme over everything. (Colossians 1:18)

Jesus is sufficient for everything we need. (Colossians 2:6-7)

If Jesus is the supreme Lord, then what do we do about it now?

1. The Church **lives** under Jesus as the supreme Lord
2. The Church **worships** Jesus as the supreme Lord

The Christian life begins with and is sustained by prayer. (Colossians 1:9-14)

The Christian life is sustained by prayer, and prayer fuels our worship.

We called to be a worshipping and witnessing Church (Colossians 4:2-6)

*We were raised with Jesus, so put on what **lives**. (Colossians 3:9)*

The Church Living the Kingdom

What does it look like when the Church lives these realities out?

Colossians 3:11 (KNT) In this **new humanity** there is no question of “Greek and Jew,” or “circumcised and uncircumcised,” of “barbarian, Scythian,” or “slave and free.”
The king is everything and in everything!

The church is the community that makes the Kingdom kind of life possible.

Colossians 3:12-14 (ESV) Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

The Kingdom of God ethic we are called to live out, living under Jesus as supreme Lord, is made possible within the community of the church. This calling is not primarily about individual effort or a solo practice. King Jesus is forming a kind of community where His life is possible. We cannot live this out alone. The church must become the kind of community that is committed to work compassion, care, love,

forgiveness, mercy, and patience with one another. We will do it imperfectly, but trying to do this alone will not result in the kind of maturity God is calling us into. It is the church, living under Jesus as Lord, living out His sufficiency, and worshiping Him in reverence that is the kind of community that makes this Kingdom kind of life possible.

The church is the community that makes the Kingdom visible.

The church is called to be a small working model of the Kingdom of God¹. How we care for one another, forgive one another, and serve one another is intended to reveal to the onlooking world what it looks like to live under Jesus as Lord. The Kingdom of God is made visible through the community of the church.

Colossians 3:15 (ESV) And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in **one body**. And be thankful.

We are not called to live this out alone. We all belong (in Christ) to something much bigger than ourselves and our small individual lives. We belong to each other as the “Body of Christ,” and we are ONE. When we isolate and separate ourselves from one another, elevating personal agenda or divisively pushing each other away, we are hindering the world’s ability to see the Kingdom of God. It is the church together, not just individual members, that makes the Kingdom of God visible.

The Kind of Community We’re Called to Be

“[T]he greetings remind us that we are dealing not with an abstract theological treatise but with a real letter to real people.” ~ N.T. Wright

Colossians 4:7-17 (ESV) Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts, and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will tell you of everything that has taken place here. Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions— if he comes to you, welcome him), and Jesus who is called Justus. These are the only men of the circumcision among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me. Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God. For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis. Luke the beloved physician greets you, as does Demas. Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the

¹ N.T. Wright, <https://enjoygodsllove.church/god-and-the-pandemic-an-interview-with-n-t-wright/>

² N.T. Wright, *Colossians and Philemon*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, p. 158

Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea. And say to Archippus, "See that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord."

The Kind of Community the Church is Called to Be:

1. The church is called to be a community of difference

Unity is a very serious matter for Paul. Seeing the church overcome differences and divisions is a cause for much of his apostolic work. The vision of community Paul was working for in the church was one of many differences, yet unified as one body (1:18, 3:11) under Christ. But, though unity is a major emphasis for Paul, it never comes at the expense of holiness and truth. Yet holiness and truth were not superior values to love. The love of Christ is what binds us together (3:14), and within the community of the church, the kingdom kind of life becomes possible. The greetings Paul concludes with have within them real examples of Paul (and Timothy, 1:1-2) working this out within the company of his co-workers.

Different Social Statuses: Doctor (Luke) and a runaway Slave (Onesimus)

Paul calls Onesimus "faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you," (4:9). Onesimus fled Colossae a pagan, runaway slave and thief (see Philemon 8-18). Paul sends him back to reconcile, now being a "faithful and beloved brother," not slave, but a brother (Philemon 16). Luke is described as "the beloved physician (doctor)," (4:14). Luke is the author of The Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. He is a common co-worker and friend of Paul. In Paul's company is a physician gospel writer, and a reconciled slave. Different status, yet one in Christ.

Different Ethnicities/Nationalities: Jews (Aristarchus, Justus, Mark) and Gentiles (Epaphras, Luke, Demas)

There was no division sharper during this time than that of the Jew/Gentile division. This is not just ethnic, but religious and cultural. There was a long and sharp history of this distinction, and there was very little in common between the two groups (see Acts 15). Much of Paul's letters are addressing this very issue (Romans and 1 Corinthians being the largest). Yet here, Paul is saying that under Jesus, these two groups can live as one body. This is not just theological, or even cultural, to Paul. This is very real and nitty-gritty to him. He works it out within the context of friendship and co-service in the ministry of the Kingdom of God.

Different Genders: Male and Female (Nympha)

Everyone gets to be a contributing member in the church, we are all in this together. Nympha was a woman of means, who hosted, and probably led, the church that met in her house. Men and women socializing together eating was scandalous in this day. The church, under the lordship of Jesus and complete worshipful reverence and devotion to him, modeled what non-sexual male/female relationships were to be like.

Different Ministry Decisions: Paul and Mark

Mark (also called John Mark) abandoned Paul on the first missionary journey; Paul and Barnabas were sharply divided about him (Acts 12:12, 25 and 15:36-41) and went their separate ways because of this disagreement. Yet, at some point in time, there was reconciliation in their relationship (see also 2 Timothy 4:11). Now, Paul sends word to this church to “welcome him,” (Colossians 4:10).

Colossians 4:18 (ESV) I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. **Remember** my chains. **Grace** be with you.

2. The Church is called to be a community of remembrance

It is powerful to be remembered. It means so much when people remember your name, or remember your story. It is even more powerful for people to remember you in their prayers. “Remembering [in prayer] is a way of bringing others into the presence of God.”³ Remembering each other is a powerful gift we can give to each other, especially when that memory sparks action: remembering to pray for each other in the midst of difficulty, remembering overwhelmed mothers in order to help with some of the basic things that come with parenting, remembering people in the hospital to visit and pray for them, etc.

Paul specifically asks for them to “remember my chains.” He has already let them know of his current status (1:23-25, 4:3), and has stated that Tychicus and Onesimus will update them on more details (4:7-9). But Paul is also building on his previous request for them to pray for him (4:3-4) while he is in this condition, and that he values them remembering him in their prayers while he suffers for the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. The Church is called to be a community of grace

The last phrase Paul uses to sign off mirrors his opening greeting (1:2), and uses his customary word, “grace,” (Gk: *Charis*). Paul uses that more than any one else (about 140 times), giving him the title, “The Apostle of Grace.” For Paul, a complete allegiance and devotion to Jesus means for him that all is grace. The heart of the gospel is the grace of Jesus Christ, what God has done for us in Christ Jesus that we could not do for ourselves. We are called to remind each other that God is gracious and full of unfailing, steadfast love (He is faithful to his covenant). We don’t judge or bully, but be gracious with one another. Grace is a person, and therefore is not limited to a doctrine, but must be a culture.

This is even exemplified in the short little statement Paul makes about Mark, “If he comes to you, welcome him.” One of the most powerful gifts we can give each other, and especially to our children, is grace — forgiveness and repentance. We need

³ Scot McKnight, *The Letter to the Colossians* (The New International Commentary on the New Testament, pg. 399

God's grace not just to forgive us, but to renew us, change us, transform us. We never graduate from grace, we will always need it. We are not called to strive, but submit — Jesus' grace is what is strong. The church should be the kind of community the world looks upon and sees the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

The church is in a critical moment. There are many false gospels in the world and much darkness and chaos lording over people's lives. The church is at an important juncture: will we keep playing church with a small Jesus and side spirituality, or will we submit our lives to the Supreme Lord Jesus, worshiping Him in every facet of our lives, and trust that He truly is over everything and we live accordingly. Will the church see itself as the working model of the kingdom of God, living out together His kingdom ethic and His kingdom community? Can the church model what unity in the face of differences looks like without compromising truth?

I believe so. And we will give our lives to that mission as servants of the Lord Jesus.

Colossians 3:15-17 (MSG) Let the peace of Christ keep you in tune with each other, in step with each other. None of this going off and doing your own thing. And cultivate thankfulness. Let the Word of Christ—the Message—have the run of the house. Give it plenty of room in your lives. Instruct and direct one another using good common sense. And sing, sing your hearts out to God! Let every detail in your lives—words, actions, whatever—be done in the name of the Master, Jesus, thanking God the Father every step of the way.