

“Through Him, In Him, and For Him”

Scripture: Colossians 1:15-23

Graphic: DNA, Christ

Key Verses: 22 he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, as as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him – provided that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith...

Theme: God showed his love for us by presenting Jesus as the sacrifice for our redemption. We are to respond by being steadfast in our faith, being filled with hope, and being a servant to Christ in this world.

1) Introduction

- a) **(SLIDE 32)** How many people have seen a DNA strand?
- b) **(SLIDE 33)** The Genetics Home Reference website tells us that, “DNA, or deoxyribonucleic acid, is the hereditary material in humans and almost all other organisms. Nearly every cell in a person’s body has the same DNA. Most DNA is located in the cell nucleus (where it is called nuclear DNA), but a small amount of DNA can also be found in the mitochondria (where it is called mitochondrial DNA or mtDNA).
- c) The information in DNA is stored as a code made up of four chemical bases: adenine (A), guanine (G), cytosine (C), and thymine (T). Human DNA consists of about 3 billion bases, and more than 99 percent of those bases are the same in all people. The order, or sequence, of these bases determines the information available for building and maintaining an organism, similar to the way in which letters of the alphabet appear in a certain order to form words and sentences.” (<http://ghr.nlm.nih.gov/handbook/basics/dna>)
- d) It BLOWS my mind to even try to think about the complexity of something that has enough information to build a PERSON from scratch, if we could do it! And I read the other day that scientists are trying to clone a Woolly Mammoth from the DNA found in a frozen baby Woolly! Crazy, right?
- e) That’s the POWER of the information and potential in DNA. Whether God wants us to be messing with this stuff or not is the topic of another sermon...
- f) **(SLIDE 34)** But you have to wonder: If a single double-helix of DNA can tell us about the vast genetic intricacies of living organisms (enough to potentially clone a dinosaur), then it’s not hard to believe that this single, *solitary person called the Christ can tell us all we need to know about the meaning of life and our relationship with God.*

- g) Are you following me?
- h) But in order for us to believe that Christ can tell us all we need to know about the meaning of life and our relationship with God, we have to know WHO he is. Jesus the Christ. Our divine DNA.
- i) **(SLIDE 35)** In our scripture lesson this morning, we'll read that he is the *firstborn of all creation*, the "image of the invisible God" (1:15). Jesus is, for us, the human face of God, the One who appears in flesh and blood to communicate to us the character of an infinite and eternal Spirit.
- j) Or, to put it in the words of scientist Robert Oppenheimer, "The best way to send an idea is to wrap it up in a person."
- k) John the Evangelist put it this way: "The Word became flesh and lived among us," and we were able to see with our own eyes the glory of the Father's only Son, "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).
- l) Perhaps a little school girl put it best when she said, according to John Yates, "Some people couldn't hear God's inside whisper, and so he sent Jesus to tell them out loud."
- m) In Jesus, we see God's compassion — out loud. In Jesus, we feel God's power — out loud. In Jesus, we get a sense of God's personality — out loud.
- n) But is it enough for us to simply understand and believe that God loves us? Or is there something that we are supposed to DO in response?
- o) Turn with me in your Bibles to Paul's letter to the Colossians, chapter 1, starting in verse 15...
- p) Pray...

2) Scripture

a) Verses 15-17 Christ's Role in Creation

- i) Christ is the IMAGE of the invisible God and ALL THINGS were created THROUGH HIM, IN/BY HIM, and FOR HIM.
- ii) **(SLIDE 36)** He is the IMAGE of God. How many of you have seen the show CSI? Miami or Las Vegas, doesn't matter...

- iii) So much of what they do to solve crimes, at least on that show, has to do with DNA evidence. They find DNA in hair, or when they swab someone's mouth, or blood or whatever
- iv) When you look at a sample of hair, you can't see the DNA. You can't touch the DNA found in a blood drop. You can't feel the DNA, right?
- v) But the Lab Technician can take that sample and somehow identify the DNA. She can identify the make-up of the DNA. And then, they get a printout of the representation of that DNA on paper. It's really just an image of the invisible DNA.
- vi) **(SLIDE 37)** Christ, says Paul, is the IMAGE of the invisible God. Christ is a physical manifestation of the invisible and eternal God. He is the "Word made flesh". He is God in human form.
- vii) The Triune God said, "I love you and I'm proving it to you by sending Jesus to be WITH you." How often do we comprehend that kind of love? It's mind-blowing...
- viii) But check this out...there's more!
- ix) See, DNA is a finite thing represented by the DNA report printout. And even though there's lots of information we can get from that report, it's still finite. And to God it's like kid's play.
- x) Christ is eternal and always has been and always will be!
- xi) Paul writes that Jesus is the FIRSTBORN of ALL creation.
- xii) **(SLIDE 38)** Man, I wish I were the firstborn! How many of you are firstborns? Identify yourselves! Do you realize how jealous the rest of us are of you? You probably have no idea ☺ Now, I know there are some things you had to do as the firstborn that we didn't, but come on...you didn't have to wear hand-me-downs...you didn't have to play with used toys... For a while, my brother had my parent's full attention all to himself. He got to drive first and date first and go to college first...all the really cool things.
- xiii) JESUS, says Paul, is the FIRSTBORN of ALL CREATION! Not just the first born in his family...not just the first born of his culture...the FIRST BORN of ALL CREATION! THROUGH HIM...IN HIM...FOR HIM...ALL THINGS were created.

- xiv) So is there anything that was NOT created through Christ, in Christ, or for Christ? NO! Words like everything, and all, and all things...pretty definite.
- xv) And not just visible things on earth like clothes and cars and toys...but all invisible things in heaven, too.
- xvi) And also, interestingly enough, four things that were believed to be between heaven and earth...things that the people in Colossae were kind of afraid of because, culturally, they were unknown and scary. Paul lists them as thrones, dominions, rulers, and powers.
- xvii) Basically, Paul is telling the people...Christ is supreme over EVERYTHING on Earth...EVERYTHING in HEAVEN...and all the other scary things that you think are threatening to you...
- xviii) God sent Jesus Christ to Earth so that we would know that God knows us...and Christ reveals that He is eternal and over all creation so that WE can know Almighty God. (REPEAT)
- xix) Paul then goes on to tell us more about WHO CHRIST IS. In verse 18...

b) Verses 18-20 Christ's Role in Redemption

- i) So not only is Christ the image of the invisible God...and not only is he exalted and has authority of ALL creation, but he is the head of the church.
- ii) So often I think we pastors think that we are the head of the church...we get the idea that we have to make the church work. That's bologna! Christ is the head of the church. When things go right in the church...Christ gets the credit. When things go horribly wrong in the church...Christ has a real problem on his hands to solve. Usually he solves it by either moving us as a body and as individuals, or he moves us out of the way.
- iii) Christ is the head of the church and we are not. Our job is to allow Christ to work through us to do what HE desires for this body. My goal as pastor is to listen to what God is asking and work together with all of you to move in that direction. I'm asking you to join me in that...and I know that building trust will take time...but let's be moving in that direction under the leadership of Jesus Christ.

- iv) And we, as a church, as the body of Christ, do that, not because we are good at it or because we like it, but because God chose to dwell in (*is pleased to dwell in*, verse 19) Christ.
- v) And through HIM, was pleased to reconcile to himself all things...by making peace through blood of the cross.
- vi) See, after creation and after sin entered the world through some prideful decisions that Adam and Eve made in the garden...things started to go down hill.....things got out of joint along the way...
- vii) And instead of leaving us in this state of sin confusion, God's heart was to reconcile...to restore what was...to make peace between Himself (holy and almighty) and what has become broken and sinful. He wants to have a relationship with his creation...with you!
- viii) And the only way to do that is by somehow paying the price for our sin...by substituting a sacrifice in place of our sin...and no other way would be permanent than the sacrifice of the one through whom, in whom, and for whom everything was created (including the very ones who continue to sin and who are broken).
- ix) And for that, we can be eternally and humbly grateful to God through Jesus Christ...whose blood was shed on the cross to cover our sins.
- x) But is that it? If we know that do we simply rest in that and be happy? Hardly...read verse 21-23

c) Verses 21-23

- i) **(SLIDE 39)** As followers of Jesus, it's not simply that we rest in our salvation, assured that when we die, we will spend eternity reconciled to God. If that's our thought, then we cheapen the death and resurrection of Jesus. God loves us and wants us to be free from the bondage of sin and free from the life that held us.
- ii) And Christ died on the cross so we could be presented (and I love this phrase in verse 22), holy and blameless and irreproachable before him...
- iii) **BUT!** And this is a big **BUT!** This is contingent upon...with the expectation that we will do certain things in response. But our response depends on who God is, and who we are.

3) Application

- a) We know who Jesus is through all we see in creation and all the witness of the saints who have gone before us. But who are we?
- b) We learn through Jesus that we “who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him” (1:21-22).
- c) We were estranged. Now we are reconciled.
- d) We don’t have to fret over issues of our relationship with God. It’s been settled.
- e) In another context, the apostle Paul writes, “If while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life” (Romans 5:10).
- f) We were enemies. Now we are friends.
- g) We were lost. Now we are found.
- h) We were imperiled. Now we are “saved.”
- i) The long and short of it is that Christ is in us, and he is our hope of glory (1:27).
- j) But what do we do in reponse?
- k) We must express this identity in the world. If we were enemies, we now live as a community of reconciliation. Our relationship with Christ demands that we:
 - i) **(SLIDE 40)** Continue securely established and steadfast in the faith – basically, Paul is telling the Colossians and us that we have to be rooted in faith in Jesus Christ and his redemption, and we have to be steadfast...steady. Maybe for that means spending more time in prayer...spending time reading your Bible each morning...being prepared to face life’s difficult moments by remembering the solid words of scripture and God’s promises.
 - ii) **(SLIDE 41)** Be firm in our hope promised in the Gospel. What hope? The hope that God will forgive our sins and that we will live eternally

with him. Hope is the thing that separates Christian from the world around us...hope that comes from eternal life in Christ.

- iii) **(SLIDE 42)** And, after Paul's example, we will be servants of Christ and his gospel. It's not enough to simply believe and have hope. Christ did not die on the cross for that alone, but died for everyone. Our task is to discern what God is calling us to do, find out what our gifts are, and then do it.
- iv) Before I became a pastor, I was doing my best to practice the first two – I had faith and I had hope. And in some ways, I was serving God. One of these days, I will share my testimony, but suffice it to say, it wasn't until God called me and I answered that my life changed. And that call was not to salvation (because I had already given my life to Christ)...that call was to vocation.
- v) And God's salvation through Christ must lead to vocation in and for Christ in each of our lives as God calls us...THAT is what we are to DO, after we know God and know who WE are...
- vi) I pray that each one of us would be passionately seeking for our vocation in Christ as we follow him...

4) Conclusion

- a) **(SLIDE 43)** In the simple chemical structure of DNA, scientists have found an incredible storehouse of information regarding the building blocks of living creatures. And that will continue, without a doubt!
- b) When God revealed his Son, Jesus Christ, to the Earth, it didn't seem like much, but in Jesus Christ, we have learned who God is, who Jesus Christ is, who we are, and what we must do as those in whom the Christ of the universe inhabits.
- c) **(SLIDE 44)** Let's pray...