

Study following Sunday February 7th

Prepare: Think about parts of creation that impact you most.

Praise: Spend time thanking God for the act of creation, done in love, through Jesus and by the Holy Spirit.

Passage: Read Colossians 1.15-20

Ponder: Our reading today comes at the beginning of Paul's letter to the church in Colossae. Although Paul probably never visited the city, he feels a sense of responsibility towards it as it seems to have been planted by a disciple who was inspired during Paul's three year ministry in Ephesus. By the time of the letter Paul is probably imprisoned in Rome and it seems the Colossae church is struggling to rid itself of false teaching. The exact nature of the false teaching is hard to pinpoint but Paul's focus is Jesus Christ - the Son - and his sufficiency for salvation.

- Read Exodus 20 verse 4

No created image of God is allowed, yet Paul points out to the Colossians that God supplies a self-portrait in the form of his Son - see also John 14.9. When we read that the Son is 'firstborn' we have to be careful to understand this as meaning that he has all the privileges and rights of an only son. Paul is not talking about a physical firstborn, the Son is not part of creation, but 'over' all creation - hence why we recite in the 'Nicene' creed he is 'eternally begotten' and 'begotten not made'. Paul seems to counteracting those at Colossae who would have looked to created things for guidance and support - such as angels or the stars. Apparently belief in the guidance of stars and angels was even more prevalent in Paul's time than it is now. Verse 16 of our passage shows Christ as an agent of creation, 'For in him all things were created'. Christ cannot be the first thing created since 'all things' without exception were created by him.

Verse 17 speaks of Christ the one in whom all things are held together.

- Have you ever had to mediate between two people or groups?

It takes skill and diplomacy to mediate, but it also demands a need to understand both sides of a disagreement or divide. The picture Paul is describing, of the Son holding all things together, is described further in his letter to Timothy and to the Romans amongst other places.

- See 1 Timothy 2.5 and also Romans 8.38-39

Looking on to Verse 18 we may be reminded that Paul talks elsewhere about the Church as the body of Christ, see 1 Corinthians 12.27, but here he adds Christ as its head, see also Ephesians 1.22-23.

As God was said to have filled the temple with his presence in the Old Testament so now Paul describes Christ being filled in a similar way with God's fullness. This is another indicator of Christ being fully divine, filled with all of God's fullness.

Our passage closes with a reminder of Christ's reconciling and saving work done on the cross. Christ reconciles and makes peace because he is the 'Prince of Peace' (Isaiah 9.6). The peace he brings is the 'shalom' of God, a completeness, harmony and wholeness. Now we too are called to be peacemakers, as Jesus proclaims, during his Sermon on the mount, that 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.'

Pray: Pray for all who are requiring mediation of one sort of or another. Pray for a growing understanding, among Christians across the globe, that the head and source of sustenance and God's presence is Christ.