

Jesus is King
JCFoM Week 3
Colossians 1:13-23
1/22/23

Series Recap

We are in the middle of a series talking about our vision as a church to be a Jesus-Centered Family on Mission with Him. We're taking 2 weeks to look at each aspect of that vision really seeking to be as clear as possible about defining our terms. Our goal in this series is to do a lot of "When we say _____, we mean _____."

Last week – "Jesus-Centered" → Jesus is the Great High Priest → Sacrifice | Mediator | Friend

This week – **Jesus is King.**

When we say we're Jesus-Centered we mean – Jesus is King. aka - Jesus is in charge. He's the boss.

Jesus is our king and we live in His Kingdom.

Colossians 1. Pray.

Introduction - Colossae

Now, to understand what Colossians 1 is talking about and how it applies to our lives today as we consider Jesus as King, you have to understand the backstory of this local church in the ancient city of Colossae.

This church was planted around 55 AD, not by Paul who is writing the letter, and who we know planted many churches, but by a man named Epaphras. Epaphras had become a Christian in another city under the preaching of Paul, and traveled back to his hometown of Colossae, preached the gospel, won some people to Jesus, and planted a church.

But just a few years in, they've got some problems. Like so many churches we read about in the NT, false teachers and false teaching have entered into the church. Now, scholars are pretty debated over what exactly the false teaching is at Colossae, we're not given a lot of details in either the Bible or other ancient sources.

But one thing that is very clear, because of how often Paul addresses it in such a short letter – is that the area under attack within the church is the Lordship or Kingship of Christ - Is Christ truly King of Kings and Lord of lords.

Now, this isn't all that surprising given the religious climate of Paul's day in the Roman empire. This was a society at the time which prided itself on religious pluralism – being accepting and welcoming of a whole variety of gods from various backgrounds and groups. In fact, it was common in this time for there to be a regular meeting among Roman leaders, officials, and philosophers where they would invite outsiders to basically pitch why the Romans should include their deity into their list of worshiped gods. Think like Shark Tank for religions.

So you were allowed to and encouraged to worship other gods as you pleased, with the added understanding that above and beyond all of those other gods was the Roman king of kings and lord of lords - Caesar. The cry of the Romans was a simple one - "Caesar is Lord."

So when these first Christians and Christian churches begin to pop up in various cities across the Roman empire, it's sort of assumed, they'll just fold Jesus in with the rest of the gods, right? One of the many they'll worship, all underneath the banner Caesar is Lord.

But followers of Jesus don't work that way. They won't bow the knee. They know, as Peter says in his famous words from Acts 4 - "Salvation is found in no one else. For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." They won't include Jesus in a list with others. They won't even put him at the top and include others beneath that. ***He stands alone as God and as king.***

In fact, in direct opposition to the cry of the Romans - "Caesar is Lord" - the first creed, repeated statement of belief, in the early church is "Jesus is Lord."

This is the tension at the forefront in the church in Colossae. False teachers leading Christians astray - worship these false gods. Is Jesus truly Lord? - And Paul writing to the church, urging them - as he says in Col 2:8 - Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him,

So what does this have to do with us? Well In some ways, we are nothing like the church in Colossae...

Chances are as you went about your week this week, you were not tempted to worship false deities. Your coworker didn't come up to you urging you to worship their sun god or the god of rain or whatever fill in the blank pluralistic god you want. You probably at no point thought - maybe I should bow the knee and acknowledge "Caesar is Lord." If that is you...where do you work and why haven't you quit?

So in some ways, we are nothing like the church in Colossae. But in other ways...we are exactly like them. While we might not face a daily pull to consider the false gods of these other nations, while our city may not put us on a stake to declare 'Caesar is Lord' - there are many times and many ways we are pulled to question the kingship of Jesus, is there not?

To live and to function and to worship, whether implicitly or explicitly:

- As if our spouse or kids are King of kings and Lord of lords.
- As if our career and upward mobility is King of kings and Lord of lords.
- As if money and economic stability is King of kings and Lord of lords.
- As if comfort and peace and a suffering free life is King of kings and Lord of lords.
- As if we, in this great experiment of western society one philosopher called "project self", are King of kings and Lord of lords.

So we need this urging from Paul in Colossians 1 just as much as this church did 2000 some odd years ago.

And I think this is going to be so helpful for us to get a vision for what it means to live as if Jesus is King.

Three Domains of Christ's Kingdom

So here's what Paul's going to do in this passage - he's going to lay out for them and for us three areas, three domains in which we need to remember and live as if Jesus is King.

He's going to work in sort of concentric circles. Starting with the outer ring, he's going to move inward, getting smaller and smaller - shrinking down the focus onto these various areas in which Jesus is King.

It's beautiful. It's poetic. Let's hop into it together.

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

Pause here just real quick. When Paul writes that Jesus is the *firstborn of all creation* – he is not saying that Jesus is the first created being. That it's like ok there was God, then He created Jesus, then the rest of the world. 65% of Christians believe that. It's a 1700 year old heresy.

God didn't create Jesus. Jesus *is* God. From eternity past, before time began, God (who has no origin) has existed as *one God, three persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*.

When Paul says He is the firstborn, he's not referring to place in the created order, he's referring to Christ's preeminence, his aboveness. That He has all of the rights and privileges of a firstborn son, especially the son of a king who would inherit a kingdom. He's referring to the kingship of Jesus.

16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things were created through him and for him. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

1. Jesus is King in the World

All things, everything you see and don't see - the spiritual world, the material world – everything was created **by** Jesus, **through** Jesus, and **for** Jesus. He is **before** – or over, above, ahead of – all things and in **HIM** all things hold together.

He is over it all. He is above it all. It all exists for Him. Everything you see in the world around you exists for Jesus.

Scriptures repeat this over and over again...

- Revelation 17:14 - "King of kings and Lord of lords".
- Matthew 28:18 - "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."
- Ephesians 1:22 - "God has put all things under Christ's feet."
- Psalm 2:4 - "He who sits in the heavens laughs..."

When we say we're Jesus-centered, we mean we live as if Jesus is king in the world. Which means we live as a people of hope, trust, and peace.

We need this. You know why? Because these are the headlines from the news on the morning of January 17, 2023, the day I was working on this section of the sermon:

- *Death toll in Ukraine rises as deadly war continues with Russia.*
- *Experts warn US Navy of impending threat from China*
- *6 people, including a baby, killed in a 'cartel-style execution' in California*
- *The world has a major debt problem, is a reset coming?*

What hope do we have but the reality that Jesus is King?

Which means we as the people of God trust Him. Even when we don't know what He's doing or when He's going to do it, we trust Him. Even though it looks bleak now, we know a day is coming where his already but not yet kingdom will be brought in full, and so we trust Him. We often talk about the spiritual warfare between kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness...but it's not a fair fight. One side has been and is being defeated. The other side is ruling and will rule and reign forever.

This world belongs to Christ!

In the famous words of Abraham Kuyper - **“There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine!”**

In Christ all things hold together. Science doesn't hold all things together. Technology doesn't hold all things together. Public policy doesn't hold all things together. The right political leader doesn't hold all things together. America doesn't hold all things together.

Jesus is King. He reigns over it all. He holds all things together.

So to be Jesus-centered means when we as a church family look out at the world around us, all of the problems, all of the struggles and hurts, we engage, we're good citizens, but ultimately we run to Christ, we seek Him and we trust Him.

“Hey I hang out with people from your church and it feels like everyone else around me is freaking out - depression is through the roof, anxiety is through the roof – and you guys are broken over what needs to be broken over but you're not freaking out. You seem to be a people of hope and rootedness and stability.”

Yeah...cause we're Jesus-centered. We know Jesus is King in the world. His Kingdom is coming.

2. Jesus is King in the Church

Look at v18...

18 And he is the head of the body, the church. (*Super important, hold it, we'll come back to it*)
He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. 19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

So Christ, through his blood, through the cross - has reconciled us, brought us back into relationship with Himself. Christ is the one who has gathered back together His people the Church.

What is the Church? The Church is the gathered people of God. It's followers of Jesus, all who have put their faith in Him, been forgiven of their sins – brought to God and to one another. ALL as a work of Christ.

So Christ brings together the church, then He is its head.

Alright, I think this is both a challenge and an encouragement for us. Because Christ being the “head” means two really important realities:

First, it means he's in charge.

In that time, for something to be the “head” of something or someone else, means that they were in charge of and responsible for it. That's the imagery, a head is quite literally over something or someone else. We have some parallel of this in our day and age, we might say a CEO is head of the company, or a manager is the head of their team. It means they have responsibility for and authority over it.

So Christ as the head, is the authority within the church. He rules and reigns over it.

Which means - none of us are in charge, He is. I'm not in charge. Garrison is not in charge. You're not in charge.

Because here's where I see this go bad all of the time – is that folks can start thinking – that church is about them.

The way pastors do this is so egregious, but I think it's really obvious. Put themselves or are put by others on a pedestal. It kind of revolves around one person and their skills or gifts, usually of public speaking or communicating. We start identifying with the pastor, not the collective church family, right? I met somebody the other day, I try to make it a point to ask – “Do you go to church anywhere?” – and he was like “yeah, I go to ____ church. You know so and so is the pastor.”

And I get what he's trying to do. I'm a pastor. Maybe I know him. There's like a secret pastor club where we all know each other. No, I'm just kidding. But what he's subtly communicating is – my church is defined, labeled, or known by this person.

But church members can make church about them too. It's sneakier. But just as dangerous.

People can start functionally acting as if church is a product, and they are the consumer, or the customer. And what's the number one rule of any retail or hospitality establishment? “Customer is king.”

And we can take that posture into church – this is about me. My preferences. My theological bent and leaning. My preferred preaching style or method. My favorite worship songs. The ministries I enjoy the most or think are most beneficial.

And that becomes our filter – “How was church today? It was ok...didn't really like that new worship song. The message didn't really resonate with me.”

But I need you to hear me on this – When we say as Citizens Church we want to be Jesus-Centered we mean – It's not about you. We want to serve you. I hope this church is beneficial to your walk with Jesus. To you being changed by the gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit.

But you're not in charge. I'm not in charge.

Jesus is King – **He's in charge. We follow Him. We submit to Him. We do what He calls us in His Word to do. We prioritize what He tells us in His Word to prioritize. He's the authority over us as a Church, AND He's what this whole thing is about. We're about making much of Him. And His glory, and His renown and His fame.**

Hugh Jackman.

- 8 months
- Skin cancer
- “From Now On”
- Worship service - everyone starts dancing and celebrating
- Pointing to Hugh

You're like ok I get it, that's the challenge. Where's the encouragement?

Christ as the head of the church means he's in charge, certainly. But it also means He holds us together.

Later in Colossians 2, Paul will accuse them of [19] **“...not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.”**

So Christ being the head means He's the authority in the church, BUT he's also the one that holds this whole thing called “the church” together. Not just the church global, but also this specific church. Christ holds Citizens Church together. He's the whole point.

****Speak to Leaders - Min Team, Group Leaders, Etc.****

Garrison and I could both quit tomorrow (we have no plans on doing that FWIW) – and it might be tough for a little bit while you figure out who's gonna preach...but life would go on for Citizens Church. Because it's not about us. The work of Jesus will continue. **We're built on Jesus.**

We're about Christ!!

3. Jesus is King in Our Lives

21 And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 22 he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him...

He says a similar thing before breaking out into his Christ hymn in v13... **13 [God] has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.**

We were once alienated and hostile in mind, in the kingdom of darkness – but we were reconciled and brought into the kingdom of Christ.

But notice – IN ORDER TO...SO THAT...we might be holy (set apart), blameless and above reproach before Him.

Listen to me on this – the gospel is not simply the good news of forgiveness of sins. It's also a declaration of Christ's Kingship over your life.

Two weeks ago when we celebrated baptisms as a church family. And we heard Megan and Kaylin's stories and they got down in the pool to declare their faith publicly before us and the world we asked them this question – Who is your, what? LORD and Savior.

Not just Savior. Not just who forgives you of your sins, but also – who is your Lord? Who rules and reigns over your life?

Many folks today, I would argue, want to be redeemed out of the kingdom of darkness – we want no more shame, no more guilt, – we want freedom, joy, peace, flourishing – all of the things offered to us in the kingdom of Christ, but we just want them all without the King. But life in the kingdom of Jesus necessitates life under the kingship of Jesus.

The Bible gives no category for someone to have Christ as Savior and not as Lord.

If He's great enough to forgive your sins and absolve your guilt, to deliver you from one kingdom into another, He is also worthy of your devotion and worship in all of life.

Paul is trying to get us to see that our salvation is not simply some intellectual assent of a few facts – Yep Jesus died. Yep I'm a sinner. It's this whole change of identity, a new spiritual reality of living in a new kingdom. You're not even close to the same – When you confess Jesus as Savior and Lord, everything is different. New identity, new kingdom, new life.

Harper - **"When I was a baby."** Since we had Norah this past Spring, Harper, our 3 year old has learned a favorite phrase. We're trying to teach her that Norah can't eat the same things as Harper, she can't play the same way as Harper. One of Harper's favorite games is chase, where we literally just run laps, our house is kind of built like a loop so we just run laps over and over and over and over again. And we've tried to teach her, Norah can't run laps because well she can't walk.

And so recently, past month or so, her new favorite phrase has become "When I was a baby." She'll say that all the time. "When I was a baby, I couldn't play chase, but now I'm a big girl." "When I was a baby, I couldn't eat grapes, but now I'm a big girl." "When I was a baby, I used a pacifier, but now I'm a big girl."

That is the picture of what it means to live under the dominion of Christ with Christ as King. We say all the time - living in God's Kingdom means life **with God under the rule and reign of God.**

- When I was in the kingdom of darkness, I used to live this way, but I know I'm set apart as holy and now I'm under the kingship of Christ.
- When I was in the kingdom of darkness, I used to run my life, but I know I'm set apart as holy and now I'm under the kingship of Christ.
- When I was in the kingdom of darkness, I used to be more focused on me than loving my neighbor, but I know I'm set apart as holy and now I'm under the kingship of Christ.

When you become a Christian, you give up the 'project self' of the secular west - where everything in your life revolves around your happiness and self-actualization, and you put yourself under the reign of God.

If He says go, you go. If He says stay, you stay. If you read in His word forgive, you forgive. He's King.

He is King!!

Conclusion

Let's finish our passage for this morning:

23 if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

Here's the challenge for us – **Jesus is King! Will we live as if that's true?**

And here's what I think the key is → Paul's argument works outside in - King of the world, the church, our lives. I think living within the kingship goes from the outside in.

- **LIVES** - First, we learn to live in our daily lives and in our hearts with Christ as King. We start repenting of our sin. We seek to live holy lives. *This is part of why we put so much focus as a church on spiritual formation.* We're trying to give you the resources and tools necessary to create space in your life for the Holy Spirit to work and to mold you and shape you more and more into people who live life with Christ under the rule and reign of Christ. But it always starts there.

- **CHURCH** - Then, it moves out from us into the church. IF we wish we went to a more loving church, we start living more loving lives. If we wish we went to a church that emphasized prayer more, we start by being praying people. It's an inside out transformation.
- **WORLD** - Then that eventually spills out and over into the world.

So this is our invitation. When we say we're Jesus-Centered. It means we have one king. One ruler. He's king over the world. He's king over this church. He's king over our lives.

And we learn on a daily basis, to say no to the other gods who would call for the throne. We learn to say "no" to Caesar being lord. We learn to declare with God's people for thousands of years – not only with our voices but with our lives – Jesus is Lord. Jesus is King.

Think about this invitation – to declare with your voice and life Jesus is King...

WORLD:

- Every time you see a post on social media that you disagree with politically, and you choose love instead of anger, you're declaring Jesus is king over the world, politics is not.
- Every time you don't cower or run from speaking the truth in love to your neighbor or coworker who needs Jesus, you're declaring Jesus is king over the world, the court of public opinion is not.

CHURCH:

- Every time we make a decision as a church that doesn't align with your preferences, and you choose to stay because you're family with us, you're declaring Jesus is King over the Church, I am not.
- Every time someone in your CG offends you, hurts you, isn't there for you like you want and you choose to forgive, you're declaring Jesus is King over the Church, my emotions are not.
- Every time you show up sacrificially for someone in our church to love them, care for them, provide for them in need, you're declaring Jesus is King and my autonomy is not.

LIVES:

- Every time you open your Bible, or pray, or fast even when you don't want to or don't feel like, you're declaring Jesus is King over my life, how I'm feeling is not.
- Every time you don't let your child's schedule keep you from worshiping with the people of God, you're declaring Jesus is King over my life, my kid is not.
- Every time you love your spouse's holiness more than their happiness, so you're willing to say hard things and push them towards Jesus, you're declaring Jesus is King over my life, my spouse is not.

We're Jesus-Centered.

He's the great high priest who dies for us, intercedes for us, welcomes us as His children.
He's also King. who rules and reigns in the world, in the church and in our lives. We surrender to Him.

Communion + Gospel. Pray.