

The Good News of the Cosmic Christ

March 17, 2019

To *KNOW* Christ and one another more deeply,
To *CARE* for one another in truth and in love,
To *GROW* as followers of Jesus,
To *SERVE* those God has placed in our path.
- CG Mission Statement

Worship: 1 Peter 2:9-17

(Here is a psalm/song to help your group as you worship)

Ready through 1 Peter 2:9-17 as a group.

Icebreaker

What is your favorite reality TV show?

Text for Discussion: Colossians 1:13-20; Ephesians 1:7-10

Turn in your Bibles and read this passage aloud together.

Aid for Discussion: Sermon Summary

The gospels tell us the Good News of the Kingdom: how God became King through the crucifixion of Jesus, Who was the fulfillment and climax of an unfolding story we call the Old Testament (Eph 1:10). His death marked the decisive turning point in God's dealings with the world. Through Jesus comes God's restoration of creation in a new Heaven and a new earth. And we are called to participate. As Herman Bavinck wrote, "From this point on, the road for the human race will pass through suffering to glory, through struggle to victory, through the cross to a crown, through the state of humiliation to exaltation. This is the fundamental law that God here proclaims before the entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven."

We all approach the world through stories; they allow us to make sense of who we are and what we were created to be. There are many competing visions we might cling to. Unfortunately, the self-defining narrative most people tell themselves is untrue. And we can never be our true self in the midst of a false story. This is what the Apostle Paul is writing about in Colossians. He challenges us to see reality through Christ's story – to allow the word of God to define reality as Jesus and His Kingdom.

Christ stands at the center of reality. All things were created through Christ, and all things find their purpose in Christ (John 1:1-4). Jesus is the image of the invisible God; we only know our Father through Him. But also, we only know ourselves through Him, because Jesus shows us humanity as we were meant to be. We are no longer the center of the story; we have been painfully displaced. Our self-centered life has been exposed, and we can finally give up on trying to be our own savior.

This new life is not something we achieve. It's not about something we have to do. It's about Grace. It is Jesus who has delivered and redeemed us. The cross has achieved the victory, reconciling us to God (Col 1:13-14). But that's only the door. The story is walking through and into what the Bible calls "the Kingdom of His Beloved Son." It isn't about trying to live up to this new Kingdom; we are learning to live into it. And in this new reality, our lives will be defined by hope and praise for our loving Father who defines the story of our lives.

What if we approached reality as if everything and everyone was created by Christ and for Christ? What if we lived knowing that Jesus loves us in ways no one else ever has or will? Imagine how fears of talking about Jesus with others would dissipate. God has made Himself known. This message about the truth of reality is on His authority, and all were created to hear His message. What if we started to live like this was true?

Guiding Question of the Week

(This question is intended as a target for the whole conversation. Do not ask for responses now. It will be repeated later in the study.)

Knowing that you are created by God and for God, how does that change the way you think of yourself?

Questions for Discussion

(Remember it is better to wrestle deeply with two good questions than gloss over many. Sub-bullets are intended for potential follow-up.)

- What are the competing visions telling about who you are and what we are supposed to be? Who names reality for you? Who defines a good life?
 - How do you determine what you listen to?
 - How does this differ from your friends or co-workers?
- Colossians 1: 16 says that all things were created through Him and for Him. How does that change the way you think about yourself?
 - How would your desires be re-ordered?
 - How would your view of people change if you remembered that each person is made in the image of God?
- The Bible is the story of reconciliation between God and us. How does that motivate you to reconcile with others?
 - What would it look like for God to restore all things?
- Knowing that you are loved by God and created for Christ, does that encourage you? .
 - What if we actually started to live like our life is not our own and we don't have to hold everything together? How would your life change?

Prayer

"Thy Kingdom Come, Thy will be done." Use this statement from our Lord's Prayer to pray over your prayer requests this week.

Experiment of the Month

(A suggestion for engagement in following the way of Jesus this week)

Experiment of the Month:

Spiritual Formation Experiment – Commit to memorizing Colossians 1:15-20. Meditate on the verses daily.

Missional Experiment - What would you include if you were to tell a brief, concise, yet complete version of God's story to an unbelieving friend or neighbor if asked? Write the story and practice sharing it with your community group for feedback. Feedback questions to ask - Did this story make sense to you? What sticks out to you? What did you learn about God? What do you wonder about? Ask a friend if you can practice telling the story to them as you learn to share it from memory. Have the community group pray that God would give you the opportunity to share it with an unbelieving friend, neighbor, or loved one.