

THE PREEMINENCE OF CHRIST
June 25, 2017 Morning Service
Colossians 1:9-20

Well we've been in Vacation Bible School and so I'm preaching on the theme text today from VBS 2017. You find it in the book of Colossians and the word of God say there: The rain fell upon the earth for 40 days and 40 nights. That's really not the theme verse, alright? That's what we had this week. We had rain, rain, and more rain. I don't know if it rained at your house. Did it rain at your house? Holy smoke, did it rain. We started the week dry and then it got wet.

Hey, church, I want to say something to you. Not everybody could have pulled off Vacation Bible School in this tropical depression storm. Not everybody had facilities to be able to do that but you've done a great job in preparation, planning, and volunteers and so it was a great, great week of Vacation Bible School. The theme text in all seriousness is taken from Colossians chapter 1. In a moment we'll begin reading in verse 9 and read down through verse 20. In the middle of that we will find the theme text about the preeminence of Christ.

VBS is where children learn of God. They learn from the Bible the greatest book ever written about Jesus, the greatest person that ever walked planet Earth. As our good friend, Dave Talley, affirmed this morning with me, the Old Testament tells us He is coming, the New Testament tells us He has come, and Revelation tells us He's coming again. It's all about Jesus from Genesis to the Apocalupsis in Revelation. We find it's Jesus, Jesus, Jesus.

It's in Vacation Bible School where I learned the books of the Bible. They drilled us and grilled us to know. Sometimes I still have a little trouble. Now is it over before Psalms or after Psalms? But it was in VBS where I stood on the stage and had to give the 66 books of the Bible. Well Bible School, thank God for it. It's still one of the greatest tools we have of reaching out to boys and girls and their families. This year Colossians 1, beginning in verse 9 was the text. The Bible says:

For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all

*things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.*¹

Notice in the end, the last part of verse 18 says that He Himself will come to have the preeminence, the first place, the top of the list if you will, that He would be first in your church life? No. First in your family life? No. First in everything. In everything. In your recreation life, Jesus first. Your home life, Jesus first. In your work life, Jesus first. Certainly in your church life. Jesus first. The preeminence. The first place of Christ. We must never, ever cease being doctrinally sound on the headship of Jesus Christ. He is Lord. He is Lord. He is Lord and we must give Him first place. This text elevates Jesus and that's what I want to try to do for just a moment today and remind us of some things and encourage us in some areas about the preeminence of Christ in our lives.

In this text we find first of all that Christ is the center of creation. Notice in verses 16 and 17. This was really the first word of Vacation Bible School. This year we were talking about creation and the galaxy and all that is around us and we find in verses 16 and 17 where the Bible says that by Him, that is by Jesus, all things were created. Things that are in heaven, earth, visible, invisible, thrones, dominions, rulers, authorities, everything. Verse 17. He's before all things and in Him all things hold together. Now if we get this wrong, we'll get it all wrong. Don't ever forget. We have to fight in our culture today. We must remind ourselves and remind the world that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. It's either God or chance.

What we tried to do in Bible School this year is what I try to do to you today. Don't you dare miss it. God, Christ is at the center of all creation. There are two books. One of them we preach from. The inerrant, infallible word of God. We believe it from stem to stern, alpha to omega. Some jokingly always say from the Genesis to the maps. We believe it all, rightly dividing the word of truth.

There is a second book that has been ever so powerful that comes against this book. I dare say 99 out of 100 people in this room have never seen it or read it but 100% of us have been affected by Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species by Means of Natural Selection*. It's either God or chance. Natural selection, survival of that that is the fittest, evolving.

I will never forget as a grade school boy opening a science book and there was a picture. He looked like a man but he looked like a monkey. He looked like a monkey but he looked like a man. He was kind of in between. It's like something these kids do on their iPhones today. You put a picture of yourself and you get a monkey chin and

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monkey eyes. I already had the monkey ears. I didn't have to have those. Their color changes and the hair would become coarse, furish. This was that Piltdown man. I said, "Look there. It is true." Then I heard a preacher say one time, "Who made his picture? Who was the guy with the camera that made that picture?" You mean that's not a real photo? No. That's the figment of somebody's imagination but it grabs the heart of children.

All of a sudden you are on the road away from God being the creator to chance, to evolutionary thought, to Darwin's original coming by the means of natural selection but you've always got to run back to the head of the line. What caused the cause? Where'd life come from? We're just walking around in nothingness and all of a sudden God said or chance happened.

Dear friend, you cannot look just around you without understanding there must be something behind the order of the world in which we live. If you've staked your eternity on this book with Christ, you better stake your beginning on this book with the creation of Christ.

Just think about three things. The eye, the egg, and the earth. Just think about those three things. Just think about your eyes. I'm going to have a little eye surgery this week. I've learned more about eyes in the last five years than I ever wanted to know. Your eye, it's a remarkable thing. You have an eyeball. It's filled with vitreous gel that changes every four hours. On one end of it is a lens. On the other end of it is a retina. There is a cornea and that helps in protection. There is an iris. There are tear glands, ducts that wash your eyes out. There's an eyelid and there are eyelashes. Now some of you have got extra ones of those. It is such a remarkable – I will never forget the first time my retina tore. All of a sudden I could only see this much. The curtain fell as they say and I could only see above. I couldn't see anything below.

Dr. Meyers went in and took a cotton swab this long and he put this much of it in my eye and he went in there. He said, "Pastor, I can fix this right here in the chair if you want me to." I'll never forget it. I looked over at him. I had no idea he'd lectured at Oxford and had been all over the world doing this. I reached up and got him by the arm. I said, "Doc, let me ask you one question. How many times have you done this?" He chuckled and told me how many hundreds and thousands. I said, "Well, listen, you've only done it one time on me."

Then he got a needle. He said, "Now what I'm going to do is I'm going to take this needle and I'm going to stick it right in the side of your eyeball and I'm going to suck all the vitreous gel out of there and I'm going to put this – I said, "You're going to do what?"

It tore again. He fixed it again. I had cataracts. They took those off. One of them is doing great, the other one is a little smoky. That's what I'm going to have done on Thursday. It just takes a few minutes. Dr. Ullman, my good friend, a big Florida

Gator, takes good care of me. Every time I go see him I wear a Tim Tebow shirt. I just want first class service. I'm going to see him Thursday.

Your eye is remarkable. It is absolutely phenomenal. And that just happened just by chance. All of those cones and lenses came together. It would take a fool to believe that. Move from your eye to an egg. When I say an egg, you think of one you eat but I'm really thinking of the one where you came from. The one found in our mother fertilized then with that sperm. I am told as I read – I wrote this down – there are 30 trillion cells in that egg and you can put millions of them on a pin head and the DNA that is in that with the complex synchronization of all that happens as that fertilization comes and that zygote is formed and it curls and then we get you. Just by chance. It would seem if it was by chance that every now and again there would be two of us just alike. No. Everyone an original. Even twins are originals. Their momma can tell them apart, I guarantee you. The egg. Amazing. That just came by chance. It would take a fool to believe that.

Then think about the Earth. You're sitting on it this morning. You doing okay? How's the ride? Hey, you're spinning. You're not just spinning. You're leaning sideways. You're not just spinning this way, you're spinning this way. It tilts just right, it spins just right, and the temperature is just right. Friend, if we were just a little closer to the sun we'd all be French-fried this morning. You move this Earth – we're the only planet like this. You move us just a little bit back from the sun, we'd be frozen tundra. How'd this planet get where it is spinning just right, tilting just right, temperature just right and stays in that path? Just by chance. It would take a fool to believe that. The fool hath said in his heart there is no God.

Let me tell you, friend, when you send your children off to school and if they get to eighth grade science they're going to confront this and if they get off to college they're not even going to confront it. It's just going to be. Now in the secular university it's just taken as so. But I've staked my claim to the word of God. All things were created by Him. Whether they're in heaven or on earth. Whether you can see them or you can't see them. Whether they're thrones or dominions, all rulers, all authorities, all things have been created through Him and for Him.

Listen. If there's no God, there's no law. Why don't you just run and be a hellion? Serve yourself. Lie all you want. Believe the alcohol ads. Gusto. It's amazing. If you drink a certain kind of liquor that you go up to the mountains, the streams run down. Just once I wish one of them would show an ad of a drunk man coming home beating his wife. Well if there's no God it doesn't matter if he beat her or not. There's no consequence. You don't give an account for that. You just live and die and worms eat you. But if in the beginning God. He brings not only a created order. He brings a moral order. If God didn't create you, you don't need a Redeemer but if He did, you do and God so loved the world that He gave His Son.

Dear friend, never forget that Christ is central to creation. This text tells us not only is He the center of creation. It tells us that Christ is the head of the church. Notice

in verse 18. He also is head of the body, the church. He's the beginning, the firstborn from the dead so that He Himself would come to have first place in everything. He was raised from the dead. That's how He got to be the head of the church. Revelation chapter 1 verse number 5 tells us so. *And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead [there it is], and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood.* Firstborn from the dead. Jesus came, He lived, He died, and He was risen from the dead. That's what makes Him head of the church.

Listen to Ephesians chapter 1, verses 22 and 23 where the Bible says: *And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.* He's the head of the church. He redeemed us. He saved us and it's His body. If you're saved today, you're a part of the body of Christ. As a matter of fact, if you're saved, say Amen. Now if you're saved, you're a part of the body of Christ and He's the head. I didn't say that if you're a member of Olive. Friend, you can be a member of Olive and be lost. A member of the church is Christ's body. You get in through the gate of the redemption of the raised Redeemer, the one with the nail scars in His hand. He's the One that opened the gate. Unless you pass by Him, you've never entered in. You're not a part of His body but when you are born again, you are birthed into the body of Christ.

We've got brothers and sisters in China today. We've got brothers and sisters in Brazil and Haiti. We've got brothers and sisters in Canada and Mexico. We've got brothers and sisters in California. They can't fly over here but we've got brothers and sisters over there. They can't fly if they work for the state of California. My Lord, help us. We've gone absolutely crazy. There's not a grain of common sense left. That's liberal, conservative, democrat, republican, independent. People are so mad and angry. The only thing that's going to save this republic is a revival of the Holy Ghost of God. I'm just telling you, you can pass any law you want to. Until the law of God's written in the hearts of men again in this country, we're sunk. It's time for the church to rise up and be the people of God. You'll never rise up and be His people until you fall down and worship.

You've got to realize He's the head. You're not the head. I'm not in charge. You're not in charge. He's in charge. He's the head of the church. He's the center of creation. Bless His name. He's the head of the church. Glory unto God. Thirdly, Christ is the fountain of salvation. Notice it in verses 20 and 21 where the Bible says: *And through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds.*

You at one time were alienated. You're way over here. God was way over there and you had to be reconciled. You had to be saved. The fountain of salvation is Christ. He's the only way to be saved and through His blood He has paved and paid the way for you to come to salvation. Reconciled, to be brought back into harmony through His blood, to have peace made.

You ever have a falling out with a friend or a spouse? Okay, let's make that non-rhetorical. Have you ever had a falling out with a friend or a spouse? This is yes. This is no. Why we've all been there. What has to happen? There has to be reconciliation. Here's what happened. God created you and you sinned against God. You turned your back and you went away and God reaches to us because we're not going to reach to Him. He reaches to us and His reach comes through His death. His blood is resurrection through His death on the cross.

There's a big argument in Florida in Pensacola right now about the Bayview cross and everybody's up in arms about the Bayview cross. I'm going down Tuesday night to rally. I'm going to speak for it. Let me let you in on something. If they take every cross in this town down it's not going to change who the Lord is. Don't you go over there and chain yourself to some cross and act a fool. Stand, appeal, ask the mayor, the counsel, pray, and work but if they take down every cross it's not going to change the gospel. Jesus is still alive. They're not going to get Him off the throne. The only way to get to the throne is get saved. You get to the throne and you're not going to want to take Him off.

I'm telling you, I'm for the Bayview cross standing there. I'm going to speak about it Tuesday night. I'm going to the rally but if they take every bit of it down I'll take up a love offering and buy it and put it out here on the corner if we want to, alright? It doesn't make any difference. Some symbol of a cross is not the issue. It's whether you've bowed at the cross and lived the cross. That's the issue. If we get every blood bought believer to stand for Christ we wouldn't be having these silly arguments around town. It's the cross where the blood was shed and the cross is what reconciles. Wouldn't it be good if some old liberal lawyer got saved because Christians acted the way they ought to? That's the business we're in. Amen. You can save the cross and lose some souls if you don't act in a proper fashion. The joy, the steadfastness of the living God. Christ is the fountain of salvation.

Let me just say to everybody in this room. I know. I know. There are people sitting in this room today, if you were to die today you'd go to hell because you're lost. Some of you are on the membership roll of this church. You've never been saved. Friend, you ought to cry out to the Lord. You ought to say, "Oh God, save me."

Fifty-three years ago today I was baptized and on Thursday fifty-three years ago I sat on the seventh row, on the end of the seventh row in Pisgah Baptist Church. Nolan Ford gave the invite and I walked forward and I knelt down. I asked the Lord to save me when I knelt at a little step just like this. I don't remember all the words I said but I remember I was lost sitting back there and when I got up here I was saved because I believed on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and He reconciled me unto Himself.

You say, "Preacher, you couldn't have been a very big sinner." Well I'll give you my mother's phone number if you'd like it. If you've sinned one time it's as if you were

guilty of every sin in the book. I was lost. I needed a Redeemer and Jesus reached to me and saved me. I told my story Thursday and 31 little boys and girls came and we spent time with them as you saw on that video. We knelt all across here and explained the gospel unto them. You say, "Preacher, you reckon it worked?" I can only tell you it worked for me. It's been 53 years and it's still working. I don't know about you.

Friend, you've got to be able to take me to a place and tell me of a time just like this. You say, "I don't know the date." That's okay if you don't know the date. You've just got to know the Lord. You've got to remember when it happened to you. You've got to at least be able to say, "Yeah, right there."

I talked to a lady last night. It was her 40th wedding anniversary and I was at a little get together they were having. I asked her. I said, "When did you come to faith in Christ?" She said, "You know, pastor, I grew up a Catholic and I knew all the stuff but it never was personal to me. I knew things. I went. I was religious but I just wasn't saved." She said, "I went to a Bible study and they began to talk about..." She said, "That's different than what I've got." She said she was sitting at home watching a Billy Graham movie and got to the end and Billy gave the invitation and she said, "That's what I've got to do." She said, "I bowed my head right there in my living room and asked the Lord to step into my heart, save my soul, and I've been different since." She's singing in our choir now, married to one of our deacons. They've been married 40 years. Glory unto God.

Has that happened to you? Jesus is the fountain, the fountain of salvation. Now I want you to look with me, right down in the 27th verse, just a little farther. How do we make Him preeminent? Look at that verse. *To whom God willed to make known what is the riches of His glory of this mystery.* Here's the *mysterion*. This is the mystery. This is the part that's invisible. Christ in you. Jesus gets in you. That's a mystery. How do you get a man in me? You've got to be born again. It is Christ and it is the incoming of Christ. You've got to tell me if Christ has ever come into your life. You invite Him to come. Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. You invite Him to come. It's the incoming of Christ.

So everybody that said you're saved I want you out loud right now in about ten words I want you to talk to me. Everybody at one time that is saved I want you to tell me where that happened to you. Like if I was sitting there I'd say Pisgah Baptist Church, 1963. So if there is a time when Jesus has been invited in and you believed by faith and He saved you, tell me out loud right now where that was.

If you confess Him before men, He'll confess you before the Father but if you don't confess Him, He won't confess you. That's the mystery of His incoming. But now watch this in that verse 27. It is not only Christ in you, it is the hope of glory, *doxa*. That is the outflowing. How do you know that He's come in? Because He goes out. How do you know that you've had the incoming of Christ? It's that you have the outgoing of His glory. You're living for Christ. You're telling people about Christ. You're doing the first thing.

Last night I was at that 40th wedding anniversary party and a sweet lady came up to me. She said, "I've never met you. I just now figured out who you are." I said, "I hope you don't figure out what I am. I'm just glad you know who I am." We laughed and she said, "You pastor that church that took care of that family for that little girl that got killed." I said, "We did the best we knew how to do." This was her word to me. She said, "Pastor, your church did right. You did right."

Let me tell you, friend, when you do right and give God glory that's the outflowing of His glory. When you know it's right, do it. Speak the truth in love. Do it. Don't be mean. Don't go down there to the Bayview cross and carry a sign that says all the liberals are going to hell. Don't be stupid. Don't act a fool. Don't act like lost people. Act like saved people. Let me rephrase that. Don't act like saved people. Be saved people. Just let the glory flow. There ought to be a song named that. Let the glory flow. Amen. That's your third assignment. I've already given you two songs to write and you haven't written either one of them yet. Let the glory of God flow.

How does that happen? I'm going to tell you how it happens. Do you know who wrote Colossians? Who wrote Colossians? Paul did. How did he know about the Christ in him and the outflow? Because in Acts chapter 9 when he gave his testimony I think if I remember right it's the 20th verse. Paul, after he got saved, they took him into the synagogue and they were all scared of him and he stood up and Paul said, "Jesus, He is the Son of God." This is a lost Jew, a murderer, a killer, a Judaiser, a man that knew the Old Testament but didn't know the Messiah. He met him on the road to Damascus, got gloriously saved, and he walked into the local synagogue and he said, "Christ is the Son of God." That's what you've got to do. If you're going to make him preeminent, you must proclaim Jesus is the Son of God. He's first place.

You know me well enough. I've told you a thousand times. I never got in any competition to finish second. Amen. Have you? Some people do but I don't. Don't give me a silver medal. I want to finish at the front of the line. I don't always. I can remember, goodness gracious, it's been over 40 years ago. I can take you to Guntersville, Alabama. I can take you to the boys' locker room. I can take you to the stall where I sat and cried like a baby. We lost in the last minute of the district final and that way we were not going to the state tournament. I wept and wept and wept. I'd lived my life to get to that pinnacle point. I didn't make it. It broke my heart. I hate to lose but I tell you, the day came when I had to say, "Lord, it's not about me and my winning. It's got to be about You and Your glory."

You've got to die to yourself and say, "Jesus es Christos." Jesus is the Lord. Amen. Preeminent. First place. You get out of first place and put Him in first place and the way that happens is at His incoming and His outflowing. Verse 18 tells you that. He is first. Friend, if He's not first He might as well be 54th in your life. He wants to be first. He's not going to back up to second. He'll be first or not at all. He's Lord of all or as we often say, He's not Lord at all. He comes to the front or He comes not at all. You've got

to say with Paul, "Jesus, He is the Son of God." He's the center of creation. He's the head of the church. He's the fountain of our salvation.

In a minute I'm going to have Jon sing a song. He's coming to sing it and when he sings that song, I want you to come. I stood right here on Thursday and gave that invitation and when I did there was a little African American boy sitting right about there. He came like he was shot out of a gun. You could see him on that video. He was the first kid that came. He was in my daughter's class. We got to lunch that day and she called the boy's name. She said, "Daddy, I knew he was coming. He's been talking about it all week long and when you gave the invitation, bam, here he came." He was setting on ready. As Frank Lay used to tell me, he's sitting on "G" looking for "O." I'm telling you, he was ready to go. He came and 30 other people came.

I'll never forget it. Fifty-three years ago, like that little boy, I was the first one that came and 16 others came after me. Seventeen of us got saved that day. I couldn't help it. I was so full of myself I wanted to be the first one to get down there. If God would've called me to wait until last I probably wouldn't have got saved. I just had those competitive juices in my heart. I said, "Brother Nolan, I want to do that." Nolan Ford's in heaven today. He was my pastor. He led me to Jesus. One of these days I'm going to die and that little boy's going to tell somebody, "I met that preacher and they led me to Christ."

Is He first in your life? You say, "He used to be, preacher." Well it's time to repent if He used to be. You've got to move Him to first place, the front of the line. Some of you need to come like that little boy, shot out of a gun today and say, "Today's my day. I'm going to be saved. I'm coming today, pastor. I'm coming to do what God's called me to do." Some of you know this ought to be your church. Some of you know you've got to come to this altar in repentance. Some of you God's going to call you to service and you've got to come and say, "Today's my day." Today. Today.