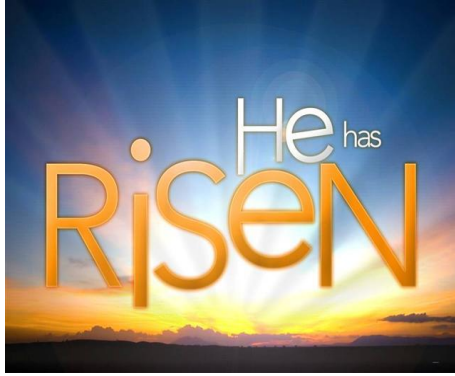


Abbey Baptist Church, Reading
Worship Service with communion 10:30am 26th April 2026
Bridget Gurney leading and Rev Zoltan Biro preaching

www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk

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The Power of the Risen Christ

Call to Worship

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness. Come before him with joyful songs.

Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his, we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise his name.

For the Lord is good and his love endures forever. His faithfulness continues through all generations.

BPW 31

Alleluia, alleluia,
give thanks to the risen Lord!
Alleluia, alleluia,
give praise to his name.

Jesus is Lord of all the earth;
he is the King of creation.

Spread the good news o'er all the earth
Jesus has died and has risen.

We have been crucified with Christ
now we shall live for ever.

Come let us praise the living God,
joyfully sing to our Saviour!

DON FISHEL (b. 1928) / © 1973 The Word of God / CCL Licence Number: 1763

Family time

The offering will be taken during the singing of this song

MP 49

Be bold, be strong,
For the Lord thy God is with thee.
Be bold, be strong,
For the Lord thy God is with thee.
Do not be afraid, do not be dismayed.
Walk in faith and victory,
Walk in faith and victory,
Walk in faith and victory,
For the Lord thy God is with thee.

Morris Chapman

Children leave for their classes

Prayer

BPW 603

What a friend we have in Jesus,
all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
all because we do not carry
everything to God in prayer!

Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged:
take it to the Lord in prayer!
Can we find a friend so faithful,
who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness,
take it to the Lord in prayer!

Are we weak and heavy-laden,
cumbered with a load of care?
Jesus only is our refuge:
take it to the Lord in prayer!
Do your friends despise, forsake you?
Take it to the Lord in prayer!
In his arms he'll take and shield you;
you will find a solace there.

JOSEPH SCRIVEN (1819-86) / CCL Licence Number: 1763

Bible Readings – Colossians 1:15-23

BPW 98

Break now the bread of life,
dear Lord to me,
as once you broke the loaves
beside the sea:
beyond the sacred page
I seek you, Lord;
my spirit longs for you,
the living word!

You are the bread of life,
dear Lord to me,
your holy word, the truth,
is saving me;
give me to eat and live
with you above;
teach me to love your truth,
for you are love.

Show me the truth concealed
within your word,
that in your book revealed
I see you, Lord;
so send your Spirit, now,
dear Lord, to me
that he may break my bonds
and set me free.

MARY LATHBURY (1842-1913) vv. 2 and 3 ALEXANDER GROVES (1843-1909) altd / CCL Licence Number: 1763

SERMON

The Power of the Risen Christ (Colossians 1:15–23)

Introduction

We are continuing our sermon series based on Paul's Letter to the Colossians.

Two weeks ago, we looked at why the apostle wrote this letter to a church he had never met. On the one hand, he wanted to encourage the Christians at Colossae. On the other hand, he wanted to make sure that these new believers were deeply rooted in Christ, that they would not substitute Christ with anything else. After all, the main message of the letter is simple but deep:

Christ is enough.

You may remember the four things the false teachers were adding alongside Christ: hollow and deceptive philosophy; ritualism; worship of spiritual powers; and asceticism. Each of these, in different ways, suggested that Christ alone was not sufficient.

Last week, Simon spoke about what it means to be filled with Christ, highlighting that if we are filled in Christ, we are full of hope, faith, and love. That truth directly challenges ritualism: if we are filled with Christ, we do not need external practices to connect us to God, we are already connected through Him.

Now, as we come to today's passage, Paul makes a shift. He moves straight from prayer into a powerful theological declaration about who Christ is. And this shift is not accidental.

It's as if Paul is saying:

If you want to understand why Christ is enough, you must first understand who Christ is.

I. The Extent of Christ's Authority – In What Ways Is Christ Lord?

Some teachers in Colossae accepted that Christ was an intermediary between humanity and God, but they also believed he was only one among many such intermediaries. However, Paul doesn't get drawn into debating spiritual hierarchies. Instead, he does something far more powerful. He opens our eyes to the identity of Christ.

Whether other spiritual beings exist or not becomes irrelevant when we see who Christ truly is. So, Paul presents three areas where Christ is supreme.

1. The Image of the Invisible God

Paul writes that Christ is "*the image of the invisible God.*"

The Greek word here is *eikon*, from which we get our word "icon." It carries two meanings: *likeness* and *manifestation*.

Think of a photograph of a loved one. You recognize the person immediately, that's likeness. But Christ is more than a photograph. He life fully revealed God's nature and being, and that is manifestation.

Imagine trying to understand the sun only from a picture. You see something, but the information is incomplete, until you experience it. Now imagine the sun itself breaking through the clouds, and instantly it's warmth hitting you, the light blinding you, that's closer to what Paul is saying about Christ. He is not a reflection of God. He is God revealed.

However, two important truths need to be acknowledged at this point: (1) Christ is more than a physical representation, He is God in His very nature; (2) Christ did not become the image of God at Christmas, He has always been so, even before creation.

And that leads us naturally to the second point.

2. Lord of Creation

Paul calls Christ the "*firstborn of all creation.*"

This does not mean He was created. Rather, it refers to status, authority, and inheritance. In the ancient world, the firstborn son had special rights and responsibilities. He represented the father and managed the household.

In light of this, what Paul is saying:

"Christ is the Lord of the entire "household" of creation."

And then he expands it:

- *In Him* all things were created (He is the source)
- *Through Him* all things were created (He is the agent)
- *For Him* all things were created (He is the goal)

Here's a simple way to picture it: If creation were a grand symphony, Christ is the composer, the conductor, and the one for whom the music is ultimately played.

Even if today the world seems chaotic and out of tune, Paul assures us that one day everything will align under Christ, because everything was created to serve his will and contribute to his glory.

3. Head of the Church

Paul then moves to the third statement, from creation to new creation. Christ is the *head of the church*.

The image of the body helps us understand this:

- The church is a living organism, composed of individual members joined together.
- There is a deep union between Christ and His people. Together the body and the head constitute one living being.
- Christ works through His church in the world. Think about your own body. Your mind forms a thought, but your hands carry it out, your mouth speaks it. In the same way, Christ is at work in the world through His people.

Now, we cannot separate this from the resurrection. Christ is *the beginning, the firstborn from the dead*, the one who defeated death and opened the way to new life. That is why this passage fits so well in Eastertide. The risen Christ is not just alive, but He is already reigning.

II. The Origin of Christ's Authority – Where Does It Come From?

At this point, someone might ask: *Where does this authority come from?*

In the following verses Paul answers this question clearly.

1. The Fullness of God Is in Christ

"For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him." (Col 1:19)

Not part of God. Not a portion. **All His fullness.**

In a culture where people believed that others could become "god-like" (what the Greeks called *apotheosis*), Paul draws a firm line: Christ is not one among many elevated beings. He is fully God.

And notice the word "**dwell.**"

This is not temporary. God did not "visit" Jesus. He took up permanent residence.

There is a difference between staying in a hotel and owning a home. One is temporary; the other is permanent. God did not "stay" in Christ, God did not rent Jesus' body for 30 years. NO... He made His permanent home in Him.

And this includes the physical body, because Christ's body matters. His humanity matters. Which leads to the second source of His authority.

2. Christ's Reconciling Work

Christ's authority is also grounded in what He has done. He reconciled all things to God through the cross. And this reconciliation happened in a real human body.

Which means Jesus experienced: pain, hunger, grief, betrayal, and ultimately, He accepted guilt, not His own, but ours and as a consequence of this He experienced the ultimate human condition, death.

If you want to picture reconciliation, think of a broken relationship where two people cannot come together. Now imagine someone stepping into the middle, taking the cost upon themselves, and making peace possible.

Imagine two nations locked in bitter conflict. Unfortunately, nowadays it is not hard to imagine this. Their borders are closed, their people hurt, and trust is shattered. No ambassador or treaty can heal the wound. Now, picture a mediator who willingly steps between the armies, risking everything to absorb the hostility of both sides. This mediator bears the cost of their conflict, offering themselves as a living bridge and paving a new road to peace. Through their sacrifice, the gates open and reconciliation become possible.

Hymn MP1022

Above all powers above all kings
Above all nature and all created things
Above all wisdom and all the ways of man
You were here before the world began

Above all kingdoms above all thrones
Above all wonders the world has ever known
Above all wealth and treasures of the earth
There's no way to measure
What You're worth

Crucified laid behind the stone
You lived to die rejected and alone
Like a rose trampled on the ground
You took the fall and thought of me
Above all

Michael W Smith

Prayers of intercession

1. We pray for the Church, the body of Christ,
Strengthen for service, Lord, all members of your Church,
not only the leaders, but also the led.
Help us to exercise our gifts, by the indwelling of your Holy Spirit,
freely and without any restrictions,
that the richness of your uniting truth may bring us
to the life and love, and the peace, joy and hope
that are so needed by all the world.
Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayers.**

2. Lord of the Nations,
grant a sufficiency of wisdom to those in authority,
both great and small, and courage to apply your wisdom
with truth, with clarity of purpose, and with compassion.
Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayers.**

3. Give grace to us and to our families,
to those whom, we love best, and who forgive us most
Grant our friends and neighbours strength in need,

Comfort in sorrow, and joy in companionship,
that we all may serve Christ in one another,
and love as he loves us.

Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayers.**

4. Lord of all, in simple trust we present
the needs of those who suffer in body, mind or spirit (especially...)
Give them a healing sense of your care and love for them
Help them to know when to fight with courage
their affliction, and when to suffer in patience and hope
and let the radiance of your grace be their comfort and their peace.
Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayers.**

5. God of power and wisdom, source of all compassion and comfort,
our minds and hearts are linked to those who have recently died, especially Gwen.
May those who mourn cast their cares on you, and be consoled by your presence
May their faith, and ours be purified and strengthened, by reminders of our mortality.
May their hope, and our, be uplifted by confidence in your justice and mercy,
and may we all be filled by your grace as citizens of your eternal Kingdom.
Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayers.**

Yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory for ever. Amen

MP 1072

In Christ alone my hope is found
He is my light my strength my song
This Cornerstone this solid Ground
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm
What heights of love what depths of peace
When fears are stilled when strivings cease
My Comforter my All in All
Here in the love of Christ I stand

In Christ alone who took on flesh
Fullness of God in helpless babe
This gift of love and righteousness
Scorned by the ones He came to save
Till on that cross as Jesus died
The wrath of God was satisfied
For every sin on Him was laid
Here in the death of Christ I live

There in the ground His body lay
Light of the world by darkness slain
Then bursting forth in glorious Day
Up from the grave He rose again
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me
For I am His and He is mine
Bought with the precious blood of Christ

No guilt in life no fear in death
This is the power of Christ in me
From life's first cry to final breath
Jesus commands my destiny
No power of hell no scheme of man

Can ever pluck me from His hand
Till He returns or calls me home
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand

Stuart Townend, Keith and Kristyn Getty

Blessing

As you go out from this building, the Lord be with you in all his power and might. The Lord keep you and bless you though the week. **Amen.**

The Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore, **Amen.**

Notices

Wednesday 29 th	10:30 12:00 2:00	Renew Café Bible study God loves you 2
Thursday 30 th	10:30 10:30	Toddlers Bible Study
Friday 1 st	10.30 5:00pm	Prayer Meeting Upper Room Table Tennis
Sunday 3 rd	10.30	Sunday Worship - Communion Rooted in the risen Christ: The price of being in Christ (Colossians 1:24-2:5) Connect Groups meeting for coffee after the service
Sunday 10 th		Church Meeting after the service

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