



The 4Cs Kingdom Life: Christ, Connection, Care, Community
Christ: “At Peace” - Colossians 1:15-22
Week of September 26, 2021

Opening Questions

- The term 'spitting image' is an allusion to someone who is so like someone else as to appear to have been spat from his mouth. The concept and phrase were in circulation by 1689, when George Farquhar used it in his play *Love and a Bottle*: “Poor child! He's as like his own dada as if he were spit out of his mouth.” Do you know anyone who is “the spitting image” of someone else?
- Describe your earliest conception of God. If someone asked you to describe God now, what would you say?

Prayer (from Colossians 1:9-12)

God, as we come together to study your Word, we ask you to fill us with the knowledge of your will. Thank you for the Holy Spirit who is here with us to help us understand how to live a life that pleases you in every way. Show us the good works you have for us to do and strengthen us with power to live as your holy people. We pray in the name of Jesus who redeemed us and brought us into your kingdom. Amen.

Introduction

Increasingly in our culture, people choose to define themselves as “spiritual but not religious.” Along with this comes all kinds of spiritual practices that may or may not be tied to a particular set of beliefs. This was true in Paul’s day, too. When he wrote his letter to the new Jesus-followers at Colossae, these same realities were on his mind. The people of that Roman city incorporated many gods into their everyday life, offering prayers and sacrifices and rituals. They also lived under the rule of Caesar whose titles included: Divine Son of God, Gospel, Peace, Salvation for Humanity, and Forgiveness of Sins.

The language Paul uses to describe Jesus would have been familiar to these Colossian believers. His concern was to make sure they understood the absolute supremacy of Jesus, the true Son of God.

Many scholars believe that Colossians 1:15-20 is part of an early Christian hymn. It was not uncommon for ancient writers to incorporate poems and songs into the body of their work. Whether or not this was Paul’s method in this letter, it serves to get across his point that “Jesus rules.”

Read Colossians 1:15-22

*Important Note

- Some translations (NIV, e.g.) use the term “first-born” twice in this passage to describe Jesus. “First-born” is a designation of supremacy or pre-eminence. Paul’s audience would have recognized this as exalted language used by other writers of their time. What Paul is saying is that Jesus is God’s delegated authority over creation and salvation.

Exploring the Text

- How is The Son described in this passage? (If a board is available, make a list as group members share)
- Which of these descriptions of The Son most captures your heart and mind? Why?
- What does it mean that The Son is the image of the invisible God?
- John’s Gospel opens with similar claims about Jesus. See John 1:1-3. What do you see in this passage that adds to your conversation?
- 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 also highlights God’s reconciling work in our world. In this passage, Paul tells the church that God has committed to us this message of reconciliation. How do we most effectively act as Christ’s ambassadors, bringing this message to our world?
- How would you describe/explain Colossians 1:15-20 to someone who knows very little about Jesus?

Closing Prayer

Depending on the needs/desires of your group here are some options:

- Ask one or two group members to close the group in prayer.
- Pray the Lord’s prayer together aloud:

“Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.”

Preparation for next week:

1. For your group time next week, bring something to share that exalts Jesus Christ. This could be a favorite hymn or praise song. Maybe it’s a great work of art or a poem or story you love.
2. Think back on your faith journey. Reflecting on Colossians 2:6-7, consider these questions:
 - When did Jesus become real to you?
 - How did that come about?
 - What difference has it made in your life?

Sources:

- Brad Nelson, A Clash of Kingdoms, Paul and His Roman World, Infusion Bible Conference 2021
 - Background of Colossians, NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible, 2016
 - The Argument of Colossians, The New Testament In Its World, N.T. Wright/Michael F. Bird, 2019
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