

**Sermon
November 24, 2019**

**Covenant Presbyterian Church
Rev. Zeta T. Lamberson**

Christ the King Sunday

**Our All in All
Colossians 1:9-20**

In A Second Helping of Chicken Soup for the Soul, Rev. John R. Ramsey tells how in one church a certain person provided him with a rose boutonniere for the lapel of his suit every Sunday. At first he really appreciated it but then it sort of became routine. Then one Sunday it became very special.

As he was leaving the Sunday Service a young boy walked up to him and said, "Sir, what are you going to do with your flower?" At first the preacher didn't know what the boy was talking about. When it sank in, he pointed to the rose on his lapel and asked the boy, "Do you mean this?"

The boy said, "Yes, sir. If you're just going to throw it away, I would like it."

The preacher smiled and told him he could have the flower and then casually asked what he was going to do with it. The boy, who was probably no more than 10 years old, looked up at the preacher and said, "Sir, I'm going to give it to my granny. My mother and father divorced last year. I was living with my mother, but she married again, and wanted me to live with my father. I lived with him for a while, but he said I couldn't stay, so he sent me to live with my grandmother. She is so good to me. She cooks for me and takes care of me. She has been so good to me that I wanted to give her that pretty flower for loving me."

When the little boy finished, the preacher could hardly speak. His eyes filled with tears and he knew he had been touched by God. He reached up and unpinned the rose. With the flower in his hand, he looked at the boy and said, "Son, that is the nicest thing that I've ever heard but you can't have this flower because it's not enough. If you'll look in front of the pulpit, you'll see a big bouquet of flowers. Different families buy them for the Church each week. Please take those flowers to your granny

because she deserves the very best."

Then the boy made one last statement which Rev. Ramsey said he will always treasure. The boy said, "What a wonderful day! I asked for one flower but got a beautiful bouquet." (John R. Ramsey, Second Helping of Chicken Soup for the Soul. Adapted by Billy D. Strayhorn, "The Gratitude Attitude")

This week we will celebrate Thanksgiving. When we think about our lives most of us realize that God has offered us so much more than one flower. We have been provided with a beautiful bouquet of blessings. Our blessings change over the years and yet every year we are given the gift of a day to reflect and be grateful.

As we come with thankful hearts this day the church year comes to a close not with a thanksgiving celebration but with a celebration of the reign of Christ for today is Christ the King Sunday. It is the culmination of the church year. The finale that brings to a close the full circle of God's love. It is the day when we recognize that God didn't just give us a baby in the manger. No, God provided a beautiful bouquet of blessings for Christ is our all in all - everything we need.

In our passage from the book of Colossians Paul describes what this bouquet looks like. He shares these images because he wants those in the church to *"lead lives worthy of the Lord"* so they can bear fruit and grow in their understanding of God. For understanding that Christ is our all in all will make us strong so that we can *"endure everything with patience while joyfully giving thanks to the Father."* In the hope that these verses can do the same for us as we celebrate the culmination of the church year and prepare to celebrate Thanksgiving I want us to reflect on three images that help us to understand what it means that Christ is our all in all.

Paul said that *"Christ is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation."* The word in Greek translated image is eikon - e-i-k-o-n - from which we get the word icon. In the age of computers, tablets and cell phones we know about icons for our screens are full of them. With a click on an icon the program is opened and all that program contains is at our fingertips. The more we click

the more is revealed. In the same way the fact that Christ is the image of the invisible God means that through him God is revealed to us.

Paul went on to say Christ is the “*firstborn of all creation.*” The word first-born doesn’t refer to the first created being. What is meant is that Christ is God’s recreation of himself - the very image of God. And through this icon - this image of God - everything we need to know about God is revealed through his son Jesus Christ.

When evangelist Billy Graham visited American soldiers in Korea during the time of hostilities there, he made it a point to go to the hospitals and talk and pray with those who had been wounded. One day as he was visiting a hospital, he met a boy who was lying face downward in a canvas cradle because his spine had been shattered by a bullet. A hole had been cut in the bottom of the cradle so the soldier could see through to the floor.

While Graham was talking to him, the young soldier said, "I would like to see your face, Mr. Graham." Billy Graham got down on his back under the cradle so the boy could look down at his face. Is that not an analogy of what God has done in Jesus Christ? God came down to our level so that we would see what God is like. That is the first thing Paul tells us, Christ is the image of the invisible God. Our icon that reveals who God is. (<https://sermons.com/sermon/christ-the-king/1346793>).

The second thing Paul says is “*he himself is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.*” Christ is the glue that helps things stick together. Several years ago Louie Giglio spoke at a Chris Tomlin concert. He was speaking about our bodies, how fearfully and wonderfully made we are. And to explain this he talked about laminin. One of you sent me information about his talk. I had never heard of laminin and maybe you haven’t either. In layman's terms, laminin is a protein in our bodies whose purpose is to hold our cells together, literally keeping us from falling apart. Laminin and other proteins essentially “glue” the cells (such as those lining the stomach and intestines) to a foundation of connective tissue. This keeps the cells in place and allows them to function properly.

But the amazing thing is that the structure of laminin at the molecular level in the body forms a cross. Friends, the stuff that "holds us together," looks like: a cross. A reminder that Christ is the glue - the one through whom all things hold together.

The final image is one we are very familiar with. *"He is the head of the body, the church."* We know that a body cannot function without the head for within the head we find our brains that signal to all parts of our body how to function. Friends, Christ is the head of the Church and without him we are nothing. For it is through Christ that we come to understand who we are as the body of Christ. It is through Christ that we come to know God. It is through Christ that we become strong and able to endure what life brings. It is through Christ that we are brought into the kingdom of God. Paul goes on to say: *"For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of the cross."*

There is a story dating back to the time of the Nazi terror in Germany. In Wittenberg-Lutherstadt, a large statue of Christ stands in front of the Castle Church. Today, it is patched and repaired: for, on one Sunday afternoon long ago, a group of Nazi youth beat the statue to pieces with clubs. They painted the following words on a nearby fence: "The reign of Christ is over."

Later, a Christian youth group saw what had been done. They repaired the broken statue. Then, taking the same paintbrush and paint can the Hitler Youth had used, they added three letters to the Nazi message: "a-l-l." The slogan on the fence now read: "The reign of Christ is over all." (Jerry Schmalenberger,

Lectionary Preaching Workbook, Series VII, Cycle C (Lima, Ohio: CSS Publishing, 2003), 114.)

Friends, that is what we celebrate today. The reign of Christ is over all. Christ is our all in all. He is everything we need. He is the icon that reveals God to us. The glue that holds us together. And the head that provides us guidance as we seek to be the body of Christ at work in the world. Let us give thanks this day for our many blessings and for the gift that Christ is our all in all.

