

(PP1) Colossians 1:11-20

“Mappa Mundi Christiana”

If you google “Ebstorf Map” on the internet, (PP2) you will see one of the most intriguing maps *in* the world. At the center of this round medieval map is Jerusalem. At the top of the map is the head of Christ, on either side are his hands, and at the bottom are his feet. In Latin, you would call it a *mappa mundi Christiana*, a Christian map of the world.

Christ literally covers this map and holds it all together. Jerusalem is his navel, with the new life of the resurrection pictured as Jesus leaving the empty tomb. Rome is represented in the shape of a lion, the Tower of Babel stands in Mesopotamia, and Adam and Eve are shown in the Garden of Eden. Around the map are descriptions of animals and the creation of the world.

The original map was 12 feet by 12 feet, painted on 30 goatskins sewn together in the thirteenth century. This map of the Christian story was found in a convent in northern Germany in 1843. Sadly, the original was destroyed exactly 70 years ago, during the World War II bombing of Hanover in 1943. All that survives is a set of black-and-white photographs and several color facsimiles.

(PP3) We've lost the original map, however, we have not lost our belief in the Son of God who holds all things together. In his letter to the Colossians, the Apostle Paul writes that Christ “is the visible image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created” (Colossians 1:15-16).

For Paul, Jesus is not simply a Galilean peasant who grew up to be a

religious leader. No, he is “*the visible image* of the invisible God;” the human face of our divine Lord. Jesus is “the firstborn of all creation,” the one who joined the wisdom of God at the beginning of God’s work of Creation.

The Gospel writer, John says, “In the beginning the Word (or, Jesus) already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him.”

Jesus is the image of God, the Firstborn of God, and the Creative power of God. So, the Christ that Paul is describing to the Colossians is not small and insignificant, or meek and mild.

Just listen to what God’s Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write about Christ: “Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth.

“Everything was created through him and for him. He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together. Christ is also the head of the church, which is his body. He is the beginning, supreme over all who rise from the dead. So he is first in everything.

“For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, and through him God reconciled everything to himself. God made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ’s blood on the cross.” Wow!!

(PP4) Many churches around the world are celebrating today as “Christ the King” Sunday, recognizing that the risen Christ is King and Lord over all of God’s creation. He is the One who holds all things together!

Sometimes it's hard to believe that truth about Christ – especially as we look around at our world. And, the struggles of life can get us “so down” at times that we feel we are about to fall apart. The next time you feel that way, I want you to remember the word “laminin.”

If you are like me, you have never heard of laminin. I learned about it when I went to hear Louie Giglio speak at a Chris Tomlin concert here in Columbia in 2007. During the concert Louie was speaking about our bodies - how fearfully and wonderfully we are made by God our Creator.

Laminin is a protein in our bodies, whose purpose is to hold our cells together, literally keeping our physical bodies from falling apart. Louie displayed on a video screen a diagram of what laminin looks like at the molecular level. (PP5) Amazingly, laminin, the stuff that "holds us together," looks just like A CROSS.

Jesus, the risen Christ, who is King and Lord over all creation, holds all things together! Not just *some* things. *All* things. (PP6) In fact, to emphasize this point, Paul repeats the word “all” eight times in these ten verses of Scripture. In Christ, *all* things hold together.

This unifying power of Jesus is one of the oldest of Christian beliefs, and it has become one of the most controversial in our day. Perhaps you have read Rob Bell's bestseller called *Love Wins: A Book About Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived*.

In his book Bell says that the first Christians insisted that when you saw Jesus – a first century Jewish rabbi – you were seeing God in skin and bones, flesh and blood. Jesus, for the first Christians, was the ultimate revelation of what God has been up to all along. And, what was God's

mission, as revealed in Jesus Christ?

“Unity, unity in all things,” says Rob Bell. “God is putting the world back together, and God is doing this through Jesus.” Again, Colossians says, “For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, and through him God reconciled *everything* to himself. God made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ’s blood on the cross.”

(PP7) God is using Christ the King to reconcile to himself all things, in earth and heaven. Christ makes peace between people and God, and between people in Christ. Christ, our Lord and King is the only One who can create unity where there is brokenness and separation.

So what does it mean for us to follow such a unifying God? What does it mean for us to join the Colossians in serving Christ the King who brings unity in all things? **(PP8)**

It means that we put *Jesus at the center of our world, making a* commitment to live the resurrection in our homes, our schools and our workplaces. It means forgiving others, as Christ has forgiven us. It means choosing life over death, as God did when he raised Jesus from the tomb. It means responding to evil with goodness, grace and love. It means that we *join Him in His work of reconciliation.* **(PP9)**

This is the toughest of challenges today, because we live in a world that is racially fractured, and politically polarized. But again, we are children of the God who “reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.” (2 Corinthians 5:18).

God wants to put the world back together. Through Jesus, *and* through us. May Christ the Lord and King of all Creation be praised, and may God bless you all, Amen.

Sermon Notes

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- Christ literally covers this map and holds it all together.
- We've lost the original map, however, we have not lost our belief in the Son of God who holds all things together.
- God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, and through him God reconciled everything to himself. God made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross.
- Churches around the world are celebrating today as “Christ the King” Sunday, recognizing that the risen Christ is King and Lord over all of God's creation. He is the One who holds all things together!
- Laminin is a protein in our bodies, whose purpose is to hold our cells together, literally keeping us from falling apart. Amazingly, laminin, the stuff that "holds us together," looks just like A CROSS.
- Jesus, the risen Christ, who is King and Lord over all creation, holds all things together!
- God is using Christ the King to reconcile to himself all things, in earth and heaven.
- So what does it mean for us to follow such a unifying God? It means that we *join Him in His work of reconciliation*. God wants to put the world back together. Through Jesus, and through us.

May God bless you all, Amen.