

The Second Sunday after Christmas: January 2, 2022

Colossians 1:13-20

“What Has Christ Done for You?”

The Father rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation, for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, things seen and unseen, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and all things hold together in him.

He is also the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that in all things he might have the highest rank. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile all things to himself (whether things on earth or in heaven) by making peace through the blood of his cross.

What has Christ done for you? Could you tell the person sitting next to you what God’s Son has done – and is still doing – for you? If you had to answer the question, what would you say? Maybe your answer would match the small Christian child’s, who boldly answers, “Jesus died to take my sins away.” What a beautiful answer that is! It takes the pinnacle truth of God’s Word and wraps it up in one sentence. But did you know that if you wanted to, you could give an even shorter answer to the question, “What has Christ done for you?” In fact, you could answer the question very accurately with just one word.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, St. Paul tells us: **...in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, things seen and unseen, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities..** Normally we think of God the Father as the creator of the universe. And he is. But here and many other places Scripture speaks of God the Son, Jesus Christ, as creating along with the Father and the Holy Spirit. So what has Christ done for you? With the Father and the Holy Spirit, he created this entire, marvelous universe in which you live. Everything that you enjoy about the world, whether it’s gardening, hunting, skiing, or whatever – you have it because Christ put the creation here for you to live in and enjoy.

What’s more: **He is before all things, and all things hold together in him.** Not only has Christ created everything with his Father and the Holy Spirit, he is also responsible for sustaining the entire universe. He holds everything together with his all-powerful hand. If he withdrew that sustaining power from the universe for even one second, it would all collapse in on itself, a house of cards in a hurricane. It is Christ who holds it all up and holds it all together.

What has Christ done for you? With his Father and the Holy Spirit, he has given you life, and the world in which you live. What is he still doing for you? Holding your life in his hands, and sustaining it together with all creation.

And Christ’s work does not stop there, because his Father loves to make promises. Open the Bible to any random page and start reading, and odds are it won’t take you long to hit a promise that God has made. And of all the promises God makes in his Word, the ones we heard in today’s

Scripture lessons stand at the center. He promised his servant King David a descendant to reign after David, and included in that promise was a descendant who would sit on the throne forever.

In order for that King to reign forever, he had to come as true God, which Christ did. Paul tells us: **He is the image of the invisible God...** and later **...God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him.** These passages very clearly teach that Jesus is truly God as well as truly a man. God promised a divine, everlasting King. And Jesus makes good on that promise.

Not only that, Jesus fulfills God's promises to use that everlasting, divine King to save his people from their sin. Listen to the rich imagery that St. Paul uses as he teaches what God has done for us in Christ: **The Father rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sin.** Again, **For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile all things to himself (whether things on earth or in heaven) by making peace through the blood of the cross.**

By nature (when we came to life in our mothers' wombs) you and I were stuck behind enemy lines, in the kingdom of Satan, condemned to stay there forever, condemned to perish in his grasp and spend eternity with him. God brought us back to himself by sending his Son into this sinful world, behind enemy lines, to rescue us. Jesus did it with his own blood, shed on the cross. By that blood God has scooped us up, lifted us out of Satan's territory and crossed us over into the kingdom where Jesus reigns. God promised a Savior from our sin, and Christ has fulfilled that promise.

What does Christ do for you? He keeps the promise that an everlasting, divine King would come. We see that promise fully kept in this Christmas season. He keeps the promise that God would use this divine King to save his people from their sins. And in Christ's life and death we have it: we are rescued from Satan's kingdom and placed in the arms of our Heavenly Father. We have forgiveness for our sins, and peace with God in this life and the next life.

But now let's hang on here a minute. Because earlier I said you could answer the question, "What has Christ done for you?" in one word, if you had too. Problem is: the closer we look at these verses from Colossians, our answer to the question keeps getting longer instead of shorter. How can we boil it down to just one word? Especially when we consider what else Christ has done for us: **He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead...** In the days these words were written, firstborn sons had supremacy and ultimate power in their families. This is the sense in which Jesus is "the firstborn" from the dead: he's mastered it; he holds power over it. He expressed his mastery over death on Easter morning. He did it for you. By rising from the dead he claimed authority over death, which means that all who die in him will rise with a glorified body, just as he did. All who die in him will live again, forever with him. What has Christ done for you? He has even delivered you from the clutches of death! He has taken away the sting and the fear of death.

What has Christ done for you? He made you, he sustains you, he fulfills God's promise by coming as the eternal King. He fulfills God's promise to save you from your sins. He breaks the clutches of death for you, so that you can live without fear now and live forever in heaven. The answer just keeps getting longer. Oh, dear.

And now we can add one more part, one that could be easily overlooked in this very rich section of Scripture. St. Paul also tells us: **He is also the head of the body, the church.** The Holy Spirit

continues to work through God's Word and his sacraments to maintain your faith in Christ and everything Christ has done for you. And as the Holy Spirit works, Christ leads his body of believers all the way until the end. He maintains his body of believers throughout the world wherever the Word is preached and taught, wherever people are baptized and communed. And he does it all so that you, I, and all believers remain in saving faith until your dying die. What has Christ done for you? Add this to the list: he has made you a member of his body of believers, which he protects and guides until the end. And he has done it to keep you in faith all your life, until you join him in his kingdom forever.

How can we possibly answer the question, "What has Christ done – and what is Christ doing – for you" in one word? Well, it would be no overstatement to answer that question with just this one word: "Everything." He has done, and continues to do, everything for us.

My guess is that most of you came to church today already knowing what Christ has done for you. But maybe the thought that he does everything for you never crossed your mind. Either way, we must not only know and believe this truth, we also need to apply it to ourselves.

Christ is the head of the church. The one who has done, continues to do, and always will do everything for his people, is the head. That means we, his people, take our orders from him. Not the other way around. The right attitude for a Christian to have is this: "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening. Tell me what you want me to do. You tell me how to live my life, how to speak your word, how to shape my attitudes." Not the other way around. Not: "Listen, Lord, and let me tell you what should say. Let me tell you what you must have meant to say." No, listen to Jesus, who is the head. Let him direct you, your family, your church. The one who does everything for us loves us thoroughly. When he tells us his will, he is telling us what is right and best. Listen to him, the head of the church who loves his people dearly and does everything for their good.

The fact that Christ has done everything for us also lifts worry out of our daily lives. Are you worried about how your family will make it through another year in a harsh economic environment? God will care for you. He promises to. And Christ teaches about God and his promises: he loves to make them, and he always keeps them. He will do it for you. Is there any other promise of God that he makes in his Word that you doubt? Look at how he fulfilled his promises in Christ, how he has done everything for you in his Son, and know this: he will keep all the promises he makes you. He will do it for you. He does everything for you.

And how about this: Do you want to live a better, more God-pleasing life in thanksgiving to Christ, but find yourself struggling to overcome your weaknesses? Do you know a fellow Christian struggling to live a life in line with God's will? Well, here's the wrong way for you to use Jesus to help you, or anyone else, to overcome your sin: "Don't you know how much Jesus loves you? How can you be so ungrateful?! What's wrong with you?! Be good or else!" This is the way Christians use Jesus way too often with themselves, their kids, their Christian friends. The purpose of Jesus becomes guiltling or battering people into living better lives (or at least lives that look better on the surface).

Don't do that to yourself, or anyone else. Don't use Jesus as a club. Don't do that because you don't need to do that. Beating God's people into living for Christ doesn't work, and it's unnecessary besides. Only the precious truths that we have learned and reviewed today will pull you out of whatever sins you struggle with in your life.

Only the gospel of Christ can work that in you. And this, too, Christ promises to do for us. See how he does everything for you. And the love you see in him who does it all for you will grow your Godly living.

He will do that for you, too. And we know he will. After all, he does everything for us. Amen.