

COLOSSIANS 1:17-22

CHRIST IS MY HEAD!

And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

For it pleased *the Father* that in Him all the fullness should dwell,

And by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled In the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight.

Imagine this scenario: We are all lost—and clueless—in the mountains, in the jungle, in Chicago. Naturally, various claim “Follow me!” Why choose one and not another? You would have your own reasons. --- Back to real life. We are all lost—in this morass, swamp, marsh—of a sinful world. We’ve gotten ourselves away from God. However, it is with Him, we need to be. Whom shall we follow to get there? On Easter Sunday, the answer is proclaimed loudly and clearly. “Follow Jesus! He is the Head and Leader you need!”

In our text from Paul’s letter to the believers or the church at Colosse, he writes. *He [Christ] is before all things, and in Him all things consist.* He says—as the rest of the Bible supports—that Christ was here before this world existed. He made it all. All things consist, hold together, function, in Him. If anyone can get you out of this hopeless morass. to the Father’s side, it is Jesus. *He is before* all things. He is God.

“Before” doesn’t just mean first in regard to time. “Before” has another meaning. “The children sang before the congregation”—in front of the group. Jesus also is “before” us. Our attention is on Him. --- In a third sense, “before” further means “first in rank” or “authority.” Whether a general is at the “front of the assembly” or not, he is definitely “before” the troops. Jesus is “before” us; He is the head of this group. Jesus is “before all things,” first in rank and in charge of all the things which He has made. He is God.

The empty tomb this morning tells us—Jesus is God! “Follow Jesus.” He won’t misdirect you. He said he would rise and He did rise. No one else declared, “Jesus, come out!” He Himself did it. “*I have power to lay it [My life] down, and I have power to take it again*” (John 10:18). Follow Jesus. He can get you out of this morass to safety.

Similarly, the text says, *He is the head of the body the church.* Jesus is your “head” in another very special way. Just as a person’s head is responsible for the rest of the body, so Jesus is the head of His believers, the church. He is responsible for the welfare of the church. Certainly this includes visible churches or congregations like St. Luke’s. But visible churches are subject to being led astray. Jesus is the head of the Invisible Church—all believers of all time—the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints. He steers all the events in the world for the sake of each soul in His Invisible Church and for the sake of the preaching of the Gospel to all the world. He is the head and leader. Follow Him to escape the swamp and morass of this life. The head will not harm the body. He is your Creator and the Head!

There is another reason to follow Jesus. *He is the firstborn from the dead.* Does that seem incorrect?—“firstborn from the dead?” Didn’t Elijah in the Old Testament raise the son of the widow of Zarephath, and Elisha raise the son of the woman of Shunam? In the New Testament, prior to His own death and resurrection, didn’t Jesus raise the daughter of Jairus, the young man of Nain, and Lazarus of Bethany? How is it that He is the “firstborn” from the dead? Remember that “first” or “before” does not necessarily mean the first in order of “time.” Rather first in rank. Without the resurrection of Jesus, none of the other resurrection would have or could have happened. Jesus is the basis of it all.

Resurrections took place in the Old Testament the promise of salvation by faith in Jesus was just as valid in the Old as in the New. Jesus would died for the world’s sins. They trusted the fulfillment to come. We trust the fulfillment that has come. Faith in the Savior brought forgiveness, salvation, new life, and even resurrection to the

people before He died, as much as it does now for us after He died. His punishment and death was for all. He was not just an example to “stick to the cause, to give it our all—even death.” He was much more. He paid your debt in full! His exit from the tomb on Easter Sunday morning, announced forgiveness and eternal life to you! Everything starts from Jesus. Your physical life at conception, your spiritual life at being born again in faith, and your eternal life granted at the at the end of time. In Christ your body will rise from the grave and your soul return to it to live forever in heaven. Jesus is the First-Born from the Dead! Follow Him to get out of this mucky mess a sinful life in this sinful world. You won’t go wrong. He is your guarantee of escape from the morass.

An interesting comparison is this: At birth the head of the babe comes first. Jesus, our Head and our beginning, was the “first born” from the tomb! We, His body, follow. Because of His birth from the tomb, we also will rise!

It pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, The Father was and is well-pleased with the mission His Son fulfilled, and with His position as Head of all things. The text says the Father was pleased *by Him to reconcile all things to Himself by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.* It is the Father’s good pleasure that Jesus reconciled sinners to the Father of glory, and the Father of glory to sinners. Reconcile means to come to peace. Jesus’ death is your reconciliation to the Father. Jesus’ resurrection is your announcement that it is true! No doubts! It’s for all sinners no matter where in the world they may be, on the earth or above. In Jesus’ Resurrection you see clearly that in Him you will get out of your morass of sin, alive! Don’t turn away from Him. Trust Him!

Does getting out of this morass alive means you will physically be “alive” when Christ returns at the end the world? Not necessarily. However, by faith you are already spiritually “alive.” Your soul upon death goes in peace to heaven, while your body goes to dust in the sleep of the grave. (The soul of the unbeliever, on the other hand, is sent to the eternal separation of hell.) By faith in Jesus you are spiritually alive in the presence of God, before and after you physically died. Jesus said, “I am the Resurrection and the Life. He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.” To the repentant thief on the cross, Jesus said, “Today you will be with me in paradise,” although the thief’s body would be put in a grave. The same for every believer. You now have spiritual life in Jesus. At the last day Jesus will raise the body and restore the soul to it. Soul and body will go to eternal life in heaven.

And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight. On Easter Sunday, the resurrection of this Firstborn from the Dead clearly assures you He has brought you the escape you need so badly. Your sins in the muck of this life have reconciliation with the Father through Jesus. You will have the sinless life of heaven! Live for Him. Follow Him. Don’t hang around in the swamp.

You do realize, don’t you, that the devil doesn’t want you to follow Jesus out of the morass? He tried to stop Jesus on His mission. He tempted Jesus three times in the wilderness, but failed. He led the proud Pharisees, chief priests, and elders of the people to act against Jesus in hate. He directed them to arrest Jesus, pronounce Him guilty, and put Jesus on the cross. He directed their mockery to “call Him out” while He was on the cross--“If you are the Son of God come down from the cross and we will believe in You.” Surely the devil clapped his hands in glee when Jesus did nothing. Jesus did not answer the call. BUT Jesus did him one better! True, He didn’t come down from the cross before He died, but He came out of the tomb on the third day—ALIVE! What a humiliating blow in the face for Satan. “Jesus lives! You lose.” It reminds me of an written account regarding a professional football player some sixty years ago. He was a hard-nosed running back, who would run into and over a tackler, rather than around him. He wanted to teach a lesson. In one particular game a tackler zero-ed in on him and hit him excruciatingly hard. The running back went down. He got up, he looked at the fellow and said, “Was that your best shot?” ---- When Jesus rose from the tomb on Easter, He was as much as saying to Satan, “Was that your best shot?”

Through Christ your Leader, you, who are a lost in the swamp dweller, have escape from the morass of sin and the punishment of sin in eternal death. He won righteousness for you and gives it to you. He taken away the guilt and shame. In Jesus, your home in heaven awaits. In Jesus, you have a safe journey through this life, maybe not always the way you want, but the way He knows is right and best for you. In Jesus you are certain to get to your Father’s side. Jesus is God, He’s your flesh and blood brother, He paid the way and paved the way for you. He died for your sins and rose again. With EASTER JOY today and every day, follow Him out of the morass. As we sing in the hymn, He is “ever-living Head!”

So be it! Amen!

Pastor Kanzenbach--