

**Sunday, November 24, 2019 – Christ the King Sunday**  
**“Right in the Head”**

Colossians 1: 13-20

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Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Ever have one of those days when nothing seems to go right? It's might start off innocently enough – a poor night's sleep followed by realizing you forgot to pick up another tube of toothpaste and you're out. You get in your car and your headlight is burned out. You get to work and your email server is down. When it's time for lunch, the line for food is long and then you're stuck behind some horribly slow car – doesn't he see he's going fifteen under the speed limit! Now you're late getting back to work. Back at home your kid has a meltdown over doing a chore, your pet made a mess in the house while you were gone and your insurance company just notified you they aren't covering your last doctor's visit. It's usually about this time, after this death by a thousand cuts that the big bomb gets dropped – your father is in the hospital, your spouse was in a car accident – their fault – and the car is totaled, your teenager made a major mistake or you get into a fight with a family member and say something you never should have said and wish so desperately you could take back.

There are plenty of things with the potential to disappoint us. We can let down and feel let down by our spouses, our parents, our children. You work for a less than perfect boss and a less than perfect company. The evening news is full of stories of government corruption and greed. How much more disheartening when, among the places we feel let down, that church ends up on that list! Is there anywhere or anyone in whom our trust is honored by someone worthy of that trust?

Our epistle text today, from the book of Colossians, was written to a new church plant. When Paul was in Ephesus in modern day Turkey, a man named Epaphras was converted to Christianity, became a pastor and started a church in nearby Colossae. It is a church that quickly had its foundations shaken. False leaders started preaching that it was by following all kinds of extra rules and observing special holidays that people would be saved. Epaphras, new in his role hasn't accrued the level of trust necessary to combat that message and have people listen. So Paul's message, of a Jesus who died as a sacrifice for us because we can do nothing

to earn God's favor on our own, was threatened, and it caused heartache for the Colossian church – one big bombshell that led some to question whether they were really even saved or not. It threw their joy in Jesus, their newfound peace into disarray – after all, these were Christians who had grown up not knowing Jesus – for some, their faith was cast into doubt and for others who still firmly believed, how disheartening it must have been to see their church being led down a deceitful and dangerous path, away from Jesus and His death and resurrection.

I think we all can relate to that feeling of being unsettled with God. We've all endured hardships in our lives and for some, it leads to questioning our faith. Does God really care about me? In other cases perhaps you have an ever-present worry and we try bringing it to God – but it's hard to stop worrying about it. Sometimes, these challenges feel insurmountable. Paul's word for the Colossians, my word for you today and God's Word for us all is one in the same – the hugely comforting and inspirational words of our epistle text.

First, where we always start and what needs to be heard over and over again – God rescues us from the rule of darkness and sin and brings us under the rule of Jesus. You and I are not left flailing around in our problems, like flood waters that threaten to drown us. Nor does God leave us disoriented, left to fend feebly for ourselves. We so often have few answers to the struggles in our lives but we are put under the rule of someone who knows all the answers and more than that, has conquered over our enemies, and more than that, is governing everything to turn it around ultimately to His good, His plan for everyone to be saved. As Christians we are forgiven and put under Jesus' rule – and like soldiers do not need to know the "why" of their objective in order to accomplish it, so too do we have a God who cares for and watches over us.

Second, who is this Jesus, what is it that He actually does as our ruler? Paul tells us He is the "image of the invisible God." God, who is invisible and who no one has ever seen, chooses to show us Himself through Jesus. We learn that Jesus is just as much God as the Father is God – all things created, in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, are made "through Him." All other rules were created by Him and for Him – the fact they often disappoint is because of their sin, not His lack of control or power. In fact, without Him the whole creation would fly apart at the seams – He guards, protects and rules it all.

There are things in this world that disappoint but despite those things that let us down, Christ is our head. The head of the Church – Jesus isn't just ruling over all creation to stroke His own ego or because He's a good administrator. It's for a purpose – and this is key – while not all things that happen in life are good – in often they're downright wrong and horrible, Jesus, who is in charge, will turn them ultimately to benefit the Church. The long term well-being of everyone who believes in Jesus is His top priority.

When we're having difficulties in life – in our relationships, with authorities who let us down, or simply with a bad day of a million small things going wrong, you and I are Jesus' top priority. It's so easy to forget, isn't it? So easy to lose sight? Believe me, I'm not going to stand here and tell you that our struggles hold no meaning or you just need to put a smile on your face. What Scripture does tell us is to expect burdens and struggles, and the difficult feelings that accompany them. Scripture doesn't tell us to throw those feelings away and shove them into a closet. It tells us to bring them and our broken selves back to Jesus who has overcome all our enemies. It tells us to expose what is left in the dark to the light – confession and forgiveness, honesty and relief of burden, guilt declared innocent, shame be gone because you are of great worth to God. It tells us to drink deeply from God's Word and to gather around Jesus' body and blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. It drives us to seek help and encouragement from Christian brothers and sisters – whether a pastor, a trusted confidante, a small group or a therapist – and to present ourselves and our problems honestly, as we really are. That can be a scary thing – which is why it's also asked of us in the Church that we be a place worthy of that trust, so that honest, hurting and broken people can safely open themselves up and be cared for and encouraged.

After all, our head, Christ, is the safest of people. His motives are pure, His interests are justice and mercy and He is, by very nature God, a God who wants the very best for us. Jesus has all authority and power to overcome all things – indeed, He already has overcome by His death and resurrection and He rules supreme over all creation.

Permit me a moment to speak frankly and honestly – that trust in our King is well-placed, and I hope that you found encouragement for the problems you face in your life to know that Jesus and His Church are safe places to come.

God's Word for us today is this: we are right in the Head. This is Jesus' Church. Especially when we're anxious, weary and carrying the weight of the world – Jesus gives us rest. In His name we pray, Amen.