

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Muskego, Wisconsin

November 24, 2019

Welcome Home To the King's Peace

Colossians 1:13-20

(The message begins with a competition to see who can blow up a balloon the fastest. My goal will be that I keep blowing up the balloon until it pops.)

That's the trouble with balloons, isn't it? There is a limit to how big you can blow up a balloon.

Today we will study a portion of Colossians. In this letter to the Christians in what is today Turkey, the Apostle Paul makes Jesus bigger and bigger, like a balloon.

The Colossian Christians were tempted to think that Jesus wasn't big enough, that there was something more that they had to do to be on God's good side so that they could be rescued. Three times in this letter Paul wrote that all the fullness of God was in Jesus. Everything that makes God God – that he is eternal, that he is all powerful, that he knows all things, that he is present everywhere – all this is in Jesus. And finally, he wrote in Colossians 2:10 that because all the fullness of God dwells in Jesus, we have fullness in Jesus. We have everything that we need for life now and for life forever.

That background can help us appreciate our text for today where the Apostle Paul makes Jesus bigger and bigger in our eyes. Jesus is everything that we need to be rescued.

Colossians 1:13-20

¹³ For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

¹⁵ The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. ¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

“He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness.”

Sometimes, I have a hard time believing that because the dominion of darkness is like this balloon. It just seems to keep getting bigger and bigger.

Do you see the dominion of darkness?

- I'm reading a book about a refuge camp in Kenya. Half a million people living in the middle of a desert because of decades of civil war in Somalia. There is darkness in so many places in this world.
- Greenfield High School has suffered the loss of two of their students to suicide in the last six weeks. Darkness reigns!
- There will be two funerals this week, and I have visited friends who are gravely ill who may never rise from their sick bed. Where death reigns, darkness reigns.
- I have learned of more marriages fractured by divorce within our circle of friends. Divorce is caused by the power of sin, in the lives of one or the other or both. Darkness reigns.
- I have seen the darkness in my own heart. Bitterness and anger so easily welling up, even in something so good as trying to work together to establish a new mission field.

Brothers and sisters, sometimes I am overwhelmed by the power of darkness.

But read again the opening statement of our text:

¹³ For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

We can see the size of the kingdom of darkness. But we have been rescued. And what is the key to that rescue? Certainly the key is that we are forgiven. But Paul doesn't magnify forgiveness in the next paragraph. The key to the rescue is Jesus, the Son whom the Father loves. Forgiveness and rescue are found in him.

The trouble is, we can see the power of darkness very easily. It can drive a person to despair. What we can't see naturally is the fullness of God in Jesus. So Paul makes Jesus larger and larger in our eyes so that we might have hope, even as we see the power of darkness around us.

That's what our Welcome Home message is really all about. We come here to let Jesus become larger and larger in our eyes. If you don't see the dominion of darkness in the world around you, if you don't see the power of sin in your family's life or in your own life, then there is no need to "come home." But if you see death and sin and guilt and despair and fear in your lives, come home to the place where Jesus can grow larger in our eyes.

In fact, today we bring one church year to a close and we look forward to the next. As we look into this next church year, let this be a "Welcome Home" church year as we see how the entire church year is designed to let Jesus grow bigger in our eyes.

Paul wrote: "He is the image of the invisible God." When we see the power of darkness, we need to see the greatness of God. But were do we see God? He is invisible. But he made himself visible in the person of his Son.



Let's come home every week to see him in the prophecies of Advent. Paul says that is "the firstborn of all creation." The firstborn, especially in the culture of the Bible, is the one who inherits the king's throne. This is what was foretold. From the promise of the Seed of the Woman who would crush Satan's head after the fall into sin, through the promise of a King who would sit on David's throne forever, the coming of the King was foretold.

The power of darkness will attack Jesus by saying this is just a story. Let's come home during Advent to see that this is more than a story. There is no other book that has prophecy and fulfillment like the Bible. Welcome Home to see Jesus grow larger in your eyes as he comes in fulfillment of the Prophecies of Advent.

For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.

Welcome Home to see Jesus grow larger in your eyes in the Glory of Christmas. The child born in Bethlehem is the almighty creator.

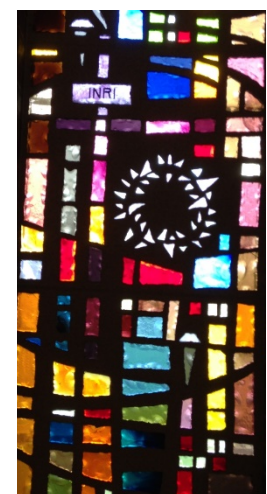
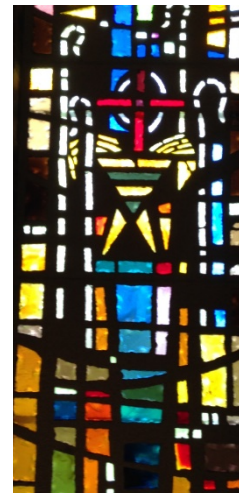


He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Welcome Home during the Epiphany season to see Jesus display his power in mighty miracles so that even his disciples are astonished: "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!" (Matthew 8:27) Let Jesus become larger, both assuring you that he is the Son of God as he claims and that he has the power to hear our prayers and step into our darkness and help us.

And he is the head of the body, the church.

See Jesus grow larger during Lent as you see his mercy in action. Just as your head does not live in separation from your body, so Jesus is not separated from us. He sees our pain in this world of darkness and is willing to suffer for his body, the church. Welcome Home during Lent to see his mercy.





He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead.

Welcome Home during the Easter season to the certainty that Easter gives. Walk with the apostles to the empty tomb. See him through their eyes. Cross examine the witnesses during the Easter season. See that this is true. Jesus has risen from the dead.

And if he has risen from the dead, then we too shall rise. He is just the beginning. On the last day we shall rise victorious over all the darkness and death that surround us.

Welcome Home to the certainty of Easter.

... so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

Welcome Home to the protection of the Ascension. We celebrate that Jesus ascended to the right hand of God and rules over all things for the good of his church.

In this world, so often it seems that darkness has the supremacy. We need to come here to see the truth by faith. Jesus has the supremacy. He can promise that “all things will work together for good to those who love God.” Welcome Home to let the protection that Jesus gives grow larger in your eyes.

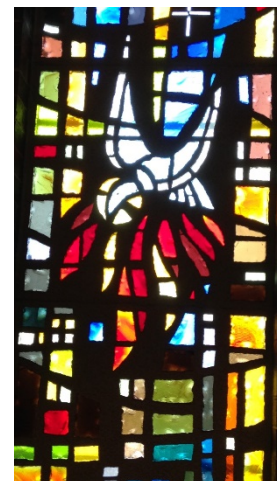


For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him.

Welcome Home to the place that we are reminded again and again that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. Come home to the place where you can see, even when it seems like God must be angry with you because of all the bad things happening to you, that the Triune God loves you perfectly, because all the fullness of God is in Jesus. When you see the cross of Jesus at the front of our church, it is God who is at peace with you. Welcome Home to the Unity of the Trinity who has put his name on you in your baptism.

... and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Finally, Welcome Home to the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Here is where we are reminded that we are reconciled. That God is at peace with us. That



he does not hold our sin against us. And that we have the privilege of sharing that peace with others.

Brothers and sisters, it is not hard to see the dominion of darkness in the world around us and in our own personal lives. It is not hard to see the dominion of darkness that is robbing family members and friends of any joy of life. It is not hard to see the dominion of darkness that brings death and destruction to all that is good.

But it is hard to see Jesus in all of this. That's why we come home, to let Jesus grow larger in our eyes.

At the beginning of the message, we had that balloon blowing competition. I popped my balloon because there are limits to how big a balloon can get. But no matter how big you blow up Jesus in your eyes, you still haven't fully grasped the greatness of our God.

I was present shortly after a dear friend died this past week. But his family was here week after week. Jesus had grown large in their eyes so that even in the face of death, Jesus was bigger than the death of their beloved husband and father. I have seen that over and over again. Jesus had grown large over the years through the hearing of God's Word.

Why commit to coming home to hear the same things over and over again this new church year? Because Jesus can never grow too large in our eyes.

Welcome Home to the place where you can see that you have been rescued from the dominion of darkness and brought into the kingdom of the Son he loves. Amen.

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My Next Steps

- **The Darkness:** Recognize the dominion of darkness. Where do you see the power of darkness in our world? In our nation? In our community? In our church? In your family? In your personal life?
- **The Key:** Let the King grow larger in your eyes. Reread Colossians 1:15-20 each day this week.
- **The Key:** Make a personal (and family) commitment that not a week will go by in this new church year without you coming to worship so that your King will grow larger in your eyes.
- **The Darkness:** Whom has God placed on your heart, a person feeling the power of darkness? When and how will you invite that individual home to the peace that your King gives?

GroupWork

1. Go around the group, each person expressing in one sentence a reason for which they are giving thanks to God this year. Repeat two or three times if you have time.
2. Read Colossians 1:13-14. Paul mentions the “dominion of darkness.” We can only appreciate a rescue when we see the need for a rescue. Discuss evidence of the “dominion of darkness” that you see:
 - a. In our world?
 - b. In our nation?
 - c. In our community?
 - d. In your own life? (Share only if you feel comfortable doing so.)
3. Read Colossians 1:15-20. Which phrases are the most remarkable descriptions of Jesus in your mind?
4. Read Revelation 1:9-18 where Jesus as King reveals himself to the Apostle John and the Church living in a time of great spiritual darkness. What in this vision of Jesus comforts you the most?
5. Read Exodus 40:34-38. When Moses dedicated the Tabernacle at Mt. Sinai, the cloud of the Glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Then Moses explained that the same cloud remained visible as they traveled through the wilderness. That visible presence of God would comfort and reassure God’s people.

Discussion this statement: Personal worship and worship as a congregation are meant to help us “see” God’s glory so we receive the same comfort as the Israelites did.
6. Review as a group the windows in our sanctuary which follow the church year. How does each season of the church year help you see that the Kingdom of God’s Son is greater than the dominion of darkness that we see in the world around us?
7. Close with prayer and the Lord’s Prayer.