No Room for Improvement July 10, 2022

*Colossians 1:15-23 Series: Jesus: Underestimated*

Where the devil is resident, that he may prevail, up with all superstition and idolatry; tensing, painting of images, candles, palms, ashes, holy water, and new service of men's inventing as though man could invent a better way to honour God with than God himself hath appointed - Hugh Latimer

Intro: Denying the return of the king

1. You can’t improve on Jesus with created things
2. Jesus alone makes God visible and accessible

v. 15 *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation*

John 1:18 *No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.*

Romans 1:23 *and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.*

1. All things were created by, through, and for Jesus

v. 16 *For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.*

John 1:3 *All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.*

1. You can’t increase your access to God with created things

v. 17 *And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together*

* What struggles or temptations do we face because God is invisible? What things are we tempted to turn to?
* How does Jesus make God uniquely visible and accessible?
* What’s so wrong with looking to Jesus and created things to access God?

1. You can’t improve on Jesus with mysticism
2. Jesus alone is the head of the church

v. 18a *And he is the head of the body, the church.*

Ephesians 1:22-23 *And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.*

1. Jesus is our only source of redemption

v. 18b *he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent*

Romans 4:25 *[Jesus] was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.*

1. You don’t need Christian magic to get more love from God

vv. 19-20 *For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.*

Romans 5:1 *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

* What are some mystical practices or rituals people (including Christians) embrace to try to improve their standing with God? Why is it tempting to do this?
* Why can we only have peace with God through Jesus? What does He alone provide? Why is that comforting?
* What separates mystical practices and superstitious rituals from good and helpful disciplines (e.g., church worship, daily prayer, Bible study, etc.)?

1. You can’t improve on Jesus’ gospel with an agenda
2. Without Jesus, we are evil in God’s sight

v. 21 *And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds*

Romans 3:23 *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*

1. With Jesus, we are holy in God’s sight

v. 22 *he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him*

1 Peter 2:9 *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*

1. You can’t amplify the hope of the gospel by rooting it in an agenda or cause

v. 23 *if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.*

* What is the gospel hope according to this passage?
* In what ways can progressives and conservatives augment (i.e. undermine) the faith and the hope of the gospel?
* How can we guard ourselves from shifting from the true gospel?

Study ahead: Next week, we’ll study Colossians 1:24-2:5

Notes