

A Picture of Jesus

Colossians 1:13-20

Introduction

A picture is worth a thousand words. Or so they say. However, a picture only shows us what someone looks like. We can't really get to know them from their picture. The apostle paints a word picture of Jesus in this reading today. And if we examine that word picture, we'll see **Who** Jesus is and **what** He does. In short, we can get to know Him.

Who Jesus Is

The Image of the Invisible God

When we say "image", we think of a 2-D picture, or maybe even a statue or icon—something made to look like the original but made from a different substance. (Read **John 10:27-30**) Jesus is saying here that He is of the same substance as the Father. A son doesn't just "look like" his father but is in many respects like his father because they're made from the same stuff and share DNA. The Son (Jesus) is the same **substance** as the Father. The difference is that because He's human, we can see Him. Therefore, He is the visible image of the invisible God.

Firstborn of All Creation

In calling Him the *firstborn of the whole creation*, Paul isn't saying that of all things, Christ was created first, quite the reverse. As the firstborn, He's **uncreated**, or as we say in the **Nicene Creed**, *Begotten, not made*. The Son was existing before creation. As Paul says in **verse 18**, He is *preeminent*.

Head of the Body, the Church

The **Explanation of the Small Catechism** says: *There is only one church, one spiritual body of believers (saints), whose one and only head is Christ.* This is another way of saying that He is the Vine and we are the branches. And as the head rules over the body, Christ rules over the church. It speaks to His kingship.

The Beginning, the Firstborn from the Dead

Other people had been brought back to life before Jesus, such as Lazarus. However, their "resurrections" were really **resuscitations**, as mortal life was temporarily restored. They would die again. Jesus was raised to **eternal life**. He is *firstborn from the dead*, because he lived a holy life, died as a man and, as God, defeated death and the devil. It shows that He is **fully divine and fully human**.

The Fullness of God

In Him the *fullness of God dwells*. This again speaks of His **divinity**. Christ is equal with the Father. He's not inferior in any way. That's the mystery of the Trinity. While there are not three gods, the fullness of the Godhead dwells within each Person, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Jesus is God.

What He Does

Alright, Christ is the **Image of God**, the **Firstborn of all creation**, the **Head of the body, the church**, the **Firstborn from the dead** and **Divine**. The question is, “What does this mean to us”? Saving faith doesn’t just accept facts about Christ. It clings to the promise of what those facts mean for us. It’s not just accepting that Christ died on the cross. Jesus said, *“My body given for you...My blood shed for you” (Luke 22:19, 20)*. I’m saved, because I cling to the fact that He died **for me**.

Creates

As God, all things were created by Him, through Him and in Him—all things, visible and invisible. Everything that belongs to the physical universe and everything that belongs to the spiritual universe were created by Him. So, as we learn in the Small Catechism: (Read first paragraph on the First Article of the **Apostles’ Creed**).

Sustains Everything

In Christ, *all things hold together (v. 17)*. The **Small Catechism** goes on to say: (Read the second and third paragraphs of same article). We depend on Him to sustain our life.

Reconciles

When we sinned, God was faced with a choice. We had become enemies with Him, and He has decreed the death of all sinners. In His truth, He must destroy all people, or somehow, in His love, be able to reconcile the differences. Jesus *made peace by the blood of the cross*. For His sake, God can forgive and **reconcile** us to Himself. He does this because His Son gave His life for us on Calvary.

Redeems

Verses 13 and 14 get to the heart of the matter. What’s this all about? In a word, **redemption**. Christ **redeemed** us, **delivered** us from the darkness of hell and **transferred** us into His kingdom through His **death on the cross**. As the **Explanation to the Small Catechism** says, *God offers forgiveness of sins only in the Gospel*. This is what the means of grace are all about—we are redeemed, forgiven, delivered from hell and transferred to the kingdom through the body and blood of Christ. This is a true picture of Jesus. Now, we’re getting to know Him.

*May the peace of God,
Which passes all understanding,
Keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus*
