

Akron Christian Reformed Church

Harry Winters

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Colossians 1.15-20; Acts 17.22-31; John 14.15-21

In Him We Live

Prayer: The winter seems long ago, and we are already feeling spring give way to summer, just as it always does. These seasonal rhythms, dear God, remind us of your faithfulness. For surely you are the God who creates and also the God who sustains, for you are the loving God of all that is.

Help us to trust you. Help us to live our lives resting in the palm of your hand. Help us to experience the comfort of being gathered beneath your wing as a mother hen gathers her chicks. Help us to discover that we live and move and have our being only in you.

As we sit here now, waiting for your word and sacrament, take hold of us and pour your presence into us, so we may know that we have truly encountered the loving creator of heaven and earth. Come and break through our stubbornness that resists you. Come and destroy our barriers that attempt to keep you at bay. Come and heal us of all our weaknesses. Come and save us, dear Lord. Come and save us. Amen.

We just read one of the greatest passages of Scripture. “The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 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. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” (Colossians 1.15-17)

I believe that is true. I believe, that in the Son, Jesus Christ, all things hold together. That thought is central to my faith.

Something deep within me resonates with the idea that the Son, the Christ is before all things and that the Son holds all things together. And that without the Christ, everything that I know now – *everything* that I know now – falls apart.

As I’ve told you before, I had a new idea a few months ago that startled me. I was thinking about the beginning and the end of all that there is. And it dawned on me that there was a definite beginning to our universe, and scientists tell us that we’re definitely speeding towards an end to our universe. So I started to wonder what was there before our universe banged itself into existence 14.6 billion years ago, and what will there be after our universe tears itself apart a few billion years from now? (2.8 to 22 billion years is the present prediction.)

And I thought, well, God was there and will be there because God is infinite. In time and in space, God is infinite. Which means that before the beginning God existed infinitely. And after the end of the universe God will continue to exist infinitely. So I wondered if there was an infinite number of universes created by the Christ before ours was created. And I wondered if there will be an infinite number of universes created by the Christ after ours ends. And that new idea gave me chills. (I know that it doesn’t really do that to most people.)

The Christ, who revealed himself, or herself, to us in Jesus, will continue to be revealed within creation, after creation, after creation, forever. The Christ “is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” Cool.

I like it when God suddenly seems more profoundly large than anything I'm able to comprehend. I like it when God's mystery shimmers unknowable all around me. I like thinking about the presence of God being filled with all manner of creatures who are also created by the Christ in the image of God, and yet are totally unrecognizable to our imaginations. I can't wait to discover that aspect of heaven. I really, really, really hope that heaven is fully integrated. I don't want to be stuck with a bunch of humans.

But my point is this: the Christ "is before all things, and in him all things hold together." And this thought helps to define what Paul means in Acts 17 when he teaches, "God is not far from each one of us. For in God we all live and move and have our being." (17.27b-28a)

The Christ of the creation is the same Christ who dwells within me, and within you, and within all of humanity. Sometimes we work so hard at finding God, at discovering God, at feeling Jesus, and much of the time we come up empty. One of our problems, I think, is that we keep searching for God over there, out there in heaven someplace, away from ourselves. When we probably need to look inside of ourselves. We need to be still to know God, because God is as close to us as our own beating heart.

Sometimes it feels to me that life is spinning out of control, threatening to break apart by the centrifugal force of living on a whip lash arm of the Milky Way that's spinning at 600,000 miles per hour as it moves through the cosmos. And yet, all that there is, seen and unseen, known and unknown, is lovingly cradled by our faithful Savior Jesus, the creator God, who holds all things together.

We're tempted to stare at the chaos and declare that the chaos is king and all is lost. We're tempted to be profoundly pessimistic about the state of life in the cosmos. And yet, in Colossians we discover that we may live confidently, even when our world is filled with destruction, violence, hatred, pollution, corrupt politicians and self-centered business people, because in the grand scheme of things the Creator Savior is still lovingly in control. We may rest contentedly because the Christ is still holding all things together. He's still preventing the Milky Way Galaxy from spinning apart. And it's in this Christ that we live and move and have our being. It's within this Christ that we exist because it's within us that the Christ exists.

Everything that surrounds us exists in the beloved Son's loving embrace, and all will be as it is to be. All is well and all will be well.

When we attempt to live outside of the worldview of the Creator King, we begin to make our own little lost realities the center of the universe, and our anxiety levels begin to rise because we know that we ourselves are out of control, and yet, even then, all is still well and every manner of thing will be well. Even when we ignore the Christ and attempt to replace the Christ and it feels as if chaos reigns in our life, God is still being God and doing what God does. God continues to dwell within us and among us. God continues to root our existence in God's existence. We continue to live and move and have our being in God, even when we do not feel it.

Thanks be to God that God is and always will be our center, God is our hope, God is doing what God is doing, and that which God is doing is a very good thing, a well thing, a proper thing.

Lift your eyes beyond the troubles of life. Lift your eyes to the billions of stars in our own galaxy, and to the billions of galaxies in our universe, and even to the billions of universes that have existed and will exist, and you will begin to discern the presence of the Christ in everything and everyone and every action. All is well and every manner of thing will be well.

Let us celebrate the feast.

In the name of the Holy Father, the Holy Son and the Holy Spirit.