

December 18, 2024 – Colossians 1:15-23 & John 14:1-11

*“In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.”* The opening verses of John 1 are beautifully poetic. They distinctly echo the opening words of Genesis 1. And yet they also give us a whole new understanding of God's creative work, gracefully tying together Old and New Testaments.

However, they're also rather paradoxical. The Word was with God. The Word was God. How is that possible? If I say I am with Craig Meyer, I cannot possibly be Craig Meyer. To be with someone is to clearly say, “I am not that person.” And yet, that's what these words confess. The Word was with God and the Word was God. Jesus is with God. Jesus is God.

Of course, the solution to this tangled mess is the Trinity. Which isn't so much a way to understand God as it is a way to confess God. The doctrine of the Trinity doesn't solve the paradox. It still doesn't make sense. But it does give us the language to say what the Bible says.

In the case of John 1, we would say that what John is poetically expressing here is a very Trinitarian statement. Jesus is with God the Father. God the Father is with Jesus. But also Jesus is the one and only God and the Father is the one and only God. It doesn't make sense, but it's a true statement. A true confession of our Biblical faith.

I bring all this up because it highlights something we often have to deal with in Scripture when discussing Trinitarian matters. Sometimes we discuss God as three: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Sometimes we discuss God as one: God. And sometimes, like in John 1, we do both in the same verse.

Last week, we discussed Jesus as “the mighty God,” and our discussion was almost entirely centered around Jesus being the Son, sent from the Father. The Father is transcendent. Far away. Impossible to know. Immortal, invisible, perfect, and almighty.

While the Son is imminent. Close to us. Fully known. He's a physical human being who was born in Bethlehem, died on a cross, and rose from the grave. And while the Father may terrify us with his power, the Son comforts us with his love.

That is one way to talk about Jesus and it is perfectly accurate. To put it in terms of John 1, it is confessing that the Word was with God. The Son is with the Father. Distinct from him, but working with him for our salvation.

This week, we go the other route. The Word was God. This is what Jesus is describing in our Gospel lesson from John 14. Jesus tells the disciples that no one comes to the Father except through him and Philip immediately jumps to the conclusion that Jesus is different from his Father. Less than his Father.

He's probably assuming, in fact, that Jesus is simply claiming to be a prophet. Because this is something that one of the prophets from the Old Testament might say. That if you follow Jesus' way, you'll end up reaching the Father. That if you listen to him and obey him and follow him, he will lead you to God. He'll point the way to God. But he is not God himself.

And so Philip says, “Show us the Father.” If you're a prophet, then give us a sign of your authenticity. Show us the Father like Moses showed us the Father on Mount Sinai. Or the way Elijah showed us the Father in the fire that fell from heaven. Show us the Father and that will be enough for us. We'll believe every word you say to us, because we'll know you are a true prophet of God the Father.

But Jesus replies, “No, that's not what I mean. I am not just a prophet like Moses and Elijah. Rather, I am in the Father and the Father is in me. I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.”

Everything that Jesus does is also the work of the Father. The two are separate and yet they cannot be separated. Because they are one. The Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Father. They are of the same substance. The Word was with God and the Word was God.

Which brings us to our title for Jesus this week: Everlasting Father. At first glance, this seems like such a contradictory title for Jesus. After all, Jesus is the Son, not the Father. And yet, he is of the same substance as the Father. He is in the Father and the Father is in Him. The Father does His works through Jesus.

So Jesus very much is the Everlasting Father. Because through Jesus we see the Father. In Jesus, we don't just see one-third of God. We see all of God. As Paul tells us today, He is the image of the invisible God. In Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.

And so, while Jesus does the work of a Son in submission to his Father. Obedient to his authority. Carrying out his Father's will. Calling us his brothers and friends. And making a way for us to his Father. Jesus also does the work of the Father. The Everlasting Father, just as Isaiah describes him.

So what is the work of the Everlasting Father? Well, there are two major works of the Everlasting Father. And they are both described in our Epistle from Colossians.

First, Christ is our creator. By Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible. John 1 makes the same point. *"All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made."* He made the earth and all that is in it. Every lump of dirt, every drop of water, every flower in the field, every bird in the air, every star in the sky, and every breath of wind.

He made heaven and all that is in it too. The angels, archangels, cherubim, and seraphim above. Even the demons below. Everything was made by Christ, our Everlasting Father.

And into this creation, he placed us. The pinnacle of his creation. And he gave us not just a perfect world, but an orderly world. A world with thrones, dominions, rulers, and authorities. He is the king above all kings. The government is on his shoulders. He sits on the throne of David. And from his everlasting authority over all creation, he gives others temporary authority over nations and churches and homes.

In Christ all things hold together. For he has never and will never abandon his creation. He is the Everlasting Father who is eternally faithful to his children. And this is why it is Jesus, the Son, who stands as the forgiving Father in the parable of the prodigal son.

Have you ever thought about that? We are the sinful son in that parable. Jesus is the Everlasting Father, waiting patiently for his son to come home. Always ready to welcome us again, forgive us, clothe us with his righteousness, and celebrate our repentant return to his arms of grace.

So the Everlasting Father is our creator. But the Everlasting Father is also our re-creator. Paul says that Jesus is the firstborn of creation. Which sounds a little odd to us, but basically all he's saying is that Jesus was the first and only thing to exist before there was a creation. And from him creation was made.

But then he also says that Jesus is the firstborn from the dead too. Jesus was the firstborn of creation who created everything. Jesus is the firstborn from the dead who recreates everything. Who resurrects everything. Who makes all things new.

And who reconciles to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. The Everlasting Father created all things, the Everlasting Father recreated all things, and the Everlasting Father makes peace with all things through his own sacrifice on the cross.

So that we do go to our Father's house, where there are many rooms. So that we are welcomed into the family home as children of God and brothers of Christ. As those who have been recreated, resurrected, and reborn through the waters of Holy Baptism. Into a new creation. Into an everlasting creation. Brought about by our Everlasting Father.

*"No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known."* No one has ever seen God. And yet the one and only God has been made known in Jesus Christ. The only God who is at the Father side has made the Father known to us. When we see Jesus, we see the fullness of the God who created us and who recreates us. When we see Jesus, we see the Everlasting Father. And we know the God who loves us. Amen.