

Christ Over All

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[0 : 00] Verse 17, Father, we pray that you, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give us now the spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of you, having the eyes of our hearts enlightened, that we may know what is the hope to which you have called us, what are the riches of your glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of your power towards us who believe.

Do this work in us now, in Jesus' name. Amen. Today's scripture reading is found in the book of Ephesians, chapter 1, verse 15 to 23.

Please follow along in your bulletins, in your booklets, and also on the screen. Verse 15 reads, For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might, that he worked in Christ, when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come.

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.

Amen. Thanks be to God. Now, I don't know yet, I'm sure we've seen the news this week. I think the greatest world news, of course, was that the Queen of England, Elizabeth, died this week.

[2 : 21] Of course, she was a wonderful queen, and of course, the nation of England, it's mourning. I think for many people, as you read what people write about it, it feels like this real source of stability is gone, right, because she reigned for 70 years, and, you know, presidents, they come and they go, and prime ministers, they come and they go, but the queen was always there, except that now, of course, she died.

It's not unexpected, 96 years old, but big shock for people. And it's just one more thing, right, because the world is so unstable. People look around, and there's the disasters and the climate change and the wars.

And, of course, COVID and the restrictions have made such a mess of everything. And then here is one thing that we can look to for stability, and that's gone. And I don't know how you respond to that.

What do we do when life seems so uncertain, when all these things are happening? I think it's very easy to just ignore it. You know, we just ignore it. We just look at our own little life.

And that is what we have under control. That's what we can plan. Of course, with COVID, we realize we can't plan life very well. Others of us, I guess we feel paralyzed, right?

[3 : 37] We look at the world. What can we do? Where is it all going? What is happening? Well, it's so great that we're here in Ephesians. Because, actually, as Paul is going to tell us, the world is really going somewhere.

There is a great plan. God has this great plan for all creation that we started with last week to this little church in Ephesus, surrounded by powerful political and spiritual forces, scared.

You know, look at God. Lift your eyes to God's great plan for all creation. And that's what I want for us today. We want to look again more at God's moving. We're going to preach through the Bible.

What is Paul doing today? Well, it's still all about God's plan. He takes a long breath after the longest sentence in the Bible that we looked at last week. I don't know how you felt.

Very overwhelming. Very mind-blowing. Well, Paul prays for us. He prays for the Ephesians. He prays for us. Guys, take a deep breath. What do I really want?

[4 : 41] You know, you've been telling us all these things, Paul. What do you want for us? Well, here is Paul's prayer. What does Paul want? Look, I want you to really know God and his plan.

Guys, you miss all this. You miss everything happening. You miss everything, how you feel. Look, I want you to really know God and his plan. That's what you see, right?

So here's a prayer. And, of course, Paul thanks God for them. Guys, praise God for you. I know God is saving people. He's doing this work. He's choosing people and saving them.

And I see that your church has formed wonderful. Thank God. But then he prays. And did you hear what he prays for? I don't know what you pray for people.

I guess we all, we're Christians. We pray for people. What do you pray for people? Here is what Paul prays. Pray for the spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him.

[5 : 40] I pray that your eyes of your heart might be enlightened. That you may know. Right? It's all about knowing. Paul prays, I want you to really know this.

Know God, the knowledge of him. Know things, his great plan. And not just kind of any bit of head knowledge. No, I want this to be real, deep, spiritual knowing.

You know, I want the spirit to work in you. I want the eyes of your heart. You know, your control center. I want that to be changed. I want those eyes to be open so you can really grasp what's going on.

That is what Paul prays. Of course, we need that, right? How are we going to find out what happened before the foundation of the world? We weren't there. How do we know what's going to happen at the end of time?

We're not there. Right? God needs to reveal that. And we need to know it in our hearts. You know, only by God's work. But I don't know what you think of that. A prayer for knowledge.

[6 : 42] A prayer that we would know stuff. Doesn't the Bible say, knowledge puffs up, but love builds up? Isn't it better for Paul to pray that, you know, the Ephesians would love people and do stuff?

I don't know what you think. Now, the letter isn't finished yet. We're going to have lots of stuff to do in the future. But the question is, what kind of knowing is this?

I mean, there's all kinds of things you can know, right? I don't know what useless trivia you know. I used to work for London Underground. I can talk about all the stations in order and those kind of things, but it's not very important.

Maybe you know all the lyrics to Encanto or Frozen. Maybe you know the periodic table. Of course, in some cases, that's very useful, but it's not really life-changing.

How about this? I want my children to know that I love them. That I, whatever they do, whatever they are, I love them. Now, that is information, but it's more than that, right?

[7 : 42] It's relational. It's something that changes their life. If they know that I love them, they can rely on me. They will feel secure. They can always come to me with everything because they know that I love them.

That kind of knowledge. And I think that's what we're talking about. That's what God wants because, okay, he has this great plan. It's not just for our information. It's not just for a pub quiz. Of course, God wants us to join in, right?

For that to dominate our life, for us to get on board with that. But how can we get on board with a plan if we are feeling insecure, if we look around and we don't know what's happening?

And so God says, hey, I want you to really know these things. Because all these things, it's that kind of stuff, right? What does he say we should know? I want you to know, verse 18, the hope to which he has called you.

I want you to know the amazing future that God has in store for you as part of this plan. Amazing hope. Because I don't know what kind of hope you think we have as Christians.

[8 : 45] You ask people on the street, what's your great future when you become a Christian? It's probably something like this, right? Sitting on a cloud with a harp and a white dress.

And that's really exciting, right? I'm going to live in a Muslim country and get beheaded so that I can have this. No, right? No. Paul says, look, God has this far greater, amazing future for you.

And if you know that, yeah, that's something you want to live for. But not just the hope to which he has called you. The riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.

And that's a weird phrase, right? His inheritance in the saints. Because it sounds like his glorious inheritance. Sounds like our great future. But it's very weird, right? Because it says, in the saints. Among the saints. What is his inheritance in the saints? Well, this isn't kind of the inheritance that comes kind of from God to us. This is that we are God's inheritance.

[9 : 50] God has an inheritance. God has a very treasured possession he will get at the end of time. It's the church. It's us. Right? And, you know, God has a great plan.

What do we get? We get last week. We get every spiritual blessing. What does God get? God gets us. We are his treasured possession. Which is quite an amazing thought, right?

That who would want me? Who would want you? God wants to have us. But what does that mean if we are God's inheritance? God's treasured possession?

Well, he cares for us, right? We are very precious to him. He's really going to look after us. I mean, we moved house last month. A lot of stuff. You just throw it in a box and throw the box in the van and bring it to the new house.

There's other stuff that's really precious, right? And we wrap it up with lots of bubble wrap and we put it in that bag and put it in our own car so that it doesn't get lost and those kind of things. Right?

[10 : 47] Because this is precious to us. Well, if you are God's treasured possession, he will look after you. He will make sure that, you know, things, you will make it.

He will make sure nothing will happen to you. Which means, can you commit to him? Can you commit to his plan? Well, yeah. God will look after you. God cares for you.

And not just that he cares about you. He has the power for it, right? Because verse 19, third thing, what is the immeasurable greatness of his power towards us who believe according to the working of his great might?

Power. Power. Because, you know, it's nice if you care, but you need to be able to care to have the ability, right? Like 10 years ago, there was this ferry in South Korea that capsized full of school children.

And it was so sad. And all these parents were crying. These parents cared a lot about their children. But, of course, they were powerless to save them. God is not powerless.

[11 : 55] God has the immeasurable greatness of his power. He has unlimited power to, you know, to fulfill his plan. Unlimited power to get you there.

Unlimited power to make everything go his way. I mean, if you know that, again, you can live for God, right? You can commit to it. If you know, you know, God has all the power to do this.

So you can see these are life-changing things, right? How great God's plan is. How much he cares for you. How much power he has. I can live for God. That is what Paul wants.

He's going to give a great example to that in a moment. But for a moment, okay, this is what Paul prays. That is Paul's priority. Hey, church, what I really want for you is to know these things, to grasp these things.

Again, is that our priority? I mean, it's one reason why we focus so much on the Bible. Because we want you guys to know God and know his plan, know what he's doing. That's why we preach from the Bible and hear CG studies with the Bible.

[12 : 59] But also prayer. What do you pray for? Again, you're going to your community group. Well, what do we pray for? I mean, many Christians, they think you only need prayer if you're sick.

You pray that you get better. Or when you don't have a job, you pray for that. I once was in a group and I asked someone, you know, what can I pray for you? And he said, well, I don't know. I'm unhealthy and my job's going well.

I don't need anything to pray for. No. Actually, God wants us to grow. He wants us to, you know, know God better.

He wants us to know what God is doing. So it will transform us. It will change us. So, you know, this is something you can pray, right? You know, during the week you're praying for your friends, for your Christian friends, for your group members.

Pray that, you know, as they get into the Bible, they would be transformed. That God would open their hearts. Parents, I don't know what you pray for your kids. You know, what you need they will go to.

[13 : 58] Their future spouse. Pray that the eyes of their hearts would be enlightened. That they would see God. That they would see, you know, his great plan for them.

And that that would transform them. Again, this is what Paul would want, right? Here is Paul. He can pray all kinds of things for them. What does he pray? That we would really know this and be transformed by it.

But then, okay. Paul, tell us more. Because he said, I want you to know these things. But he then goes and answers his own prayer. Look, let me give you an example.

Let me give you an example of part of what God is doing. And he goes to, well, the exaltation of Christ. How Jesus was exalted.

We talk about his life, his death, his resurrection. It's always a resurrection, right? He ascended to heaven. And he's now seated at the right hand. That's where he's going. The power that, verse 20. [14:58] That he worked in Christ. When he raised him from the dead. And seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places. Far above all rule and authority and power and dominion.

And above every name that is named. Not only in this age, but also in the one to come. All this exalted language, right? But, you know, Jesus exalted.

Let's just think about that, Paul says. You know? Of course. Great act of power, right? That's a big thing here. God's power. Jesus.

You know, on Saturday. What was Jesus? He was a corpse. Yeah? Good Friday. He died on the cross. Saturday. He was a corpse. In a tomb. Starting to rot. Not very promising, right?

For God's salvation. But then he went, yeah. God acted. And he went from corpse to king of the universe. God raised him from the dead.

[15:58] Exalted him. And now he is above every rule and authority and power and dominion. I don't know. When you hear that. What do you think of rulers and authorities?

Maybe you think of your manager. Your boss. You think of national governments. You think of international bodies. Actually, in Ephesians, it's mainly spiritual.

You know? Even above whatever government there is. There are angels and demons ruling. And, you know, Paul says, Jesus is above that all.

Jesus is ruling above everything. Every other God, everyone you can call on, Jesus, is far above that. Now, what does that show?

It shows incredible power, right? Of course, the power of Jesus. That he is now the king of the whole universe. The king of all creation. But look at the father.

[16:55] Look what he did. How he just took Christ and put him there and put the whole universe under him. I mean, let me give an example. So, you know this family, maybe? You know the second guy on the left, Bill Gates?

Now, he's now retired. He's also divorced. But think back a few years ago when he was the boss of Microsoft, right? One of the richest men in the world. One of the most powerful men in the world.

Now, the guy on the left. And then all the way on the right is his son, Rory. He's now studying. And maybe when he's graduating, the job market isn't too good. And he's struggling to find a job.

So, Bill has the ideal graduation present. I'm going to give him a majority share in Microsoft and make him CEO. That's a nice graduation present, right?

Rory suddenly becomes a very powerful graduate. But he stands in the shadow of his dad, right? Who can just do this? Who can just take a company of 220,000 employees, 200 billion revenue, and just here.

[17:59] Give it to his son. That's authority, right? That's power. And that's only a small thing compared to what God the Father did. Who gave the whole universe to Jesus as a footstool for his feet, right?

All creatures, all planets, all angels, and all demons, and Satan, all under Jesus' rule. That's power. And then suddenly, well, you're not afraid, right? Because, wow, here is God. And look what incredible power he has. And not just a random power.

I mean, this is part of God's plan. Remember last week? What was God's plan? We sang it this morning. I mean, you can go back one page. One verse 10. As a plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in him, in Christ.

Things in heaven and things on earth. God's plan for the fullness of time is to bring everything united together under Christ. Now, how important is Jesus' exaltation?

[19:06] Well, that's basically it, right? You need to put Christ over everything and then everything together under him. Well, this is the big step one. Jesus over everything. And so, in terms of progress, God's plan is in principle done, right?

He's going to bring the whole universe under Christ. Well, Christ is over all. It's there. Which is kind of, wow, God's plan is basically complete.

Right? He just now needs to, Jesus needs to kind of exercise that and bring everything together. But Jesus is already exalted over everything. There's no need to fear. No one can stop him. He is already over everything.

And that's great news. That is, you know, this plan is going to happen. I think that's, you know, so often we make our plans, right? We have our plans for our job, our career.

And we have plans for our kids and plans for our retirement. And, you know, such tiny plans in a way, right? Plans for a few people for a few years. And here is God and his plan for the whole creation for all time.

[20 : 12] But how often do our plans work out? Usually they don't, right? Things go wrong. And even if we don't mess it up, COVID or something comes along. Here is a much bigger plan and a plan that is complete.

Because God can do it. Because God has all the power to do it. Here is something you can get behind. Here is something you can give your life to. Right? Incredible power.

But not just power. Actually, those other things we can see are here as well. Because if you look at verse 22, that's very interesting, right? Okay, Jesus is head over all.

Verse 22. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church. Jesus is a gift.

He gave Jesus to the church as head over everything. Now, how is Jesus being king a gift? I don't know what you think. Jesus as king. I mean, we don't really like kings and rulers.

[21 : 14] It seems scary. It seems distant. But it's a gift. Now, let's go back to Bill Gates. So now, let's not focus on Rory.

Let's focus on his daughter, Jennifer. Jennifer, which is, we see God's care here. A few more photos. So his daughter, Jennifer, just got married.

And Bill Gates really loves his daughter. And he wants her to be really good taken care of. So now he gives a wedding present. He takes her fiancé, gives him a majority share in Microsoft, and makes him CEO.

And then he knows that she's taken care of for all her life, right? Now, that's still power. But it's now power given in love, right?

He loves his daughter. And so, you know, I'm going to give you a CEO as husband. I'm going to make your husband CEO. Right? That is love. And that is what God did.

[22 : 17] He gave Jesus. He made him king over everything and gave him to us. Because, you know, we need a good king. We need a... Who do you want to be in charge?

You want a good ruler. I mean, the queen. Why is everyone mourning? Why is this... Is there so many tributes? Because she was such a wonderful woman, right? She was a Christian. She was humble.

She was a servant. She devoted her life to doing good for the people. That's the kind of person you want to be queen or king, right? A good ruler. I mean, what was the opposite?

A totally evil ruler. A communist dictator like Kim Jong-un, right? When he dies, there's not going to be many tributes. Just a sigh of relief, to be honest, right? No, you want a good ruler.

You don't want no ruler. That's also a mess. Look at Somalia. No, we want, you know, a good ruler. And God, he loves us so much, he's given us the perfect king.

[23 : 14] The king who died for us. The king who is so committed to us. Yeah, that he went to the cross for us. And he says, okay, I want you to rule the universe.

So that whatever happens, it's now controlled by Jesus, the king of love. I mean, that changes your perspective, right? I mean, there's so much. It's a big, dangerous universe.

So much that can go wrong. How do we know it's not going to go out of control? Well, because God gave Jesus the control center of the universe. Jesus is in charge.

Jesus is on the throne. And now everything is under control by the king of love. And that's a gift to us, right? And that shows God's care for us. I want you to make it.

I want you to be there at the end as part of my plan. And so Jesus is going to make sure that everything will go exactly my way. It's a gift. It's a wonderful gift. I mean, of course, it may not look like it.

[24 : 12] You see the world and you really think, wow, is this really going Jesus' way? And that's where we need to have faith, where we're just very small. And God's plans are much bigger than us.

And we kind of need to trust that, you know, actually. But what's the alternative? What if the world is really out of control? We couldn't live, right? No, no.

Jesus is in control. He's on the throne. He rose from the dead. He's there. And He's making sure everything is going to plan. Everything is going to make sure that, you know, we as a church will get there.

Because we are His treasured possession. We are His bride. He wants us to be there. And He'll rule the universe to make sure we'll get there. How wonderful, right?

Again, that's something you can give your life to, right? It's something that assures us. When everything goes wrong in life, Jesus is on the throne. It's fine. It'll be okay. Wonderful.

[25 : 12] So that's, yeah, power, care, and finally, hope. You know, look at the hope to which you've called us. Because, again, this is, and that's here in the passage as well.

It's a little bit less obvious, but this passage tells us something about your great future. Verse 23.

What does it say about the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all?

The church is Christ's body. It's part of Him. It's united with Him. Of course, Jesus, He's so great. He fills the universe. But, you know, as a church, we're connected to Him, united to Him.

What does it mean for your future? Well, the best thing to do is just make a drawing of the various body parts that we see in this passage.

Okay, so what does it say in verse 22? Well, God put all things under His feet. Okay, here. You can see that I've been to art school, right?

[26 : 13] Everything is under Jesus' feet. And He gave Him, Christ, as head over everything. Okay, so here is Jesus' feet and the head over everything.

This is the end of time. Now, where are you? Well, the church, which is His body, right? There's the church. Right?

That's the picture here. You are part of Christ, and so you will be sharing in God's rule of the universe forever. I mean, we don't think about it like that.

But let me put it another way. Just think about it. Jesus is the king of the universe, right? And we are the bride of Christ. Doesn't that make us the queen of the universe? In some way.

And the Bible doesn't put it like that. But it says, right, we will reign with Him. We'll be sitting on thrones. We'll be judging angels. Because, you know, the church is God's special people.

[27 : 13] And we're united to Christ and we'll be sharing with Him in His reign. I mean, that was always the plan, right? God made Adam and Eve, and they were to have dominion over all creation under God. Of course, they sinned.

It all went wrong. Here comes Jesus, the second Adam. And here is a new humanity that's going to reign with Christ forever. And that's us.

That's the hope here. That is your great future. Sharing in Christ. Sharing His rule. Doesn't that kind of lift your eyes?

I don't know how you feel about your job and your life. Ecclesiastes seems right, right? Everything seems meaningless. Your job seems so insignificant, so unimportant.

Not going anywhere. This is God's future for you. This is what He is doing. Doesn't that kind of lift your eyes a bit? That, hey, look, you're not unimportant.

[28 : 11] You're not insignificant. God has this great future for you. And actually, we can start in that now. He has this plan. Why don't we live for that now?

Why don't we get on board with that now? Let's make God the center of our lives. And live for Him. Isn't that so much more significant and important than your current job, right?

I hope we can see that. I mean, these are amazing things. And they're mind-blowing things. And they're things that we just need to think about, right? I mean, that's what Paul wants. He doesn't expect us to just now get up.

He expects us to sit and meditate and think and grasp. But then, yeah, let this transform you. You know, being transformed by the idea that Jesus is on the throne with all power.

What that means for our lives. What it means for our future. So we can live for Him. What an amazing thing, right? So, yeah, that's all I can do at this time, right?

[29 : 14] You know, know this. Grasp this. Let it change your heart. Right? And then, well, as we go on, as Paul tells us, okay, this is not what I want you to do.

We can live for Him. But just think about it this week, okay? So I'm going to pray for us now. And Ben's going to come up. And then we're just going to spend a few minutes just reflecting, taking in what you've just seen.

You know, read over your notes and pray and, yeah, meditate. So let me just pray again. Our Father, these are things that we could never know by ourselves.

How great You are. How great Your plan is for all creation. Father, we want to know these things.

We want to be changed by them. We need Your help.

We need You to work in our hearts. Because by ourselves, we're just concerned about the things of this world. Concerned about other things. Concerned about things that don't matter. So lift our eyes to Jesus.

[30 : 16] Help us see Him on the throne, in His glory. And what it means for our lives. What it means for the world. What it means for the future. And would it change us? Father, make us the church You want us to be.

By, you know, helping us be transformed by just such a deep grasp of You. So please do that work in us now as we think, as we pray, and as we go on this week.

Being transformed. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.