

Who is Jesus, Really

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[0 : 0 0] Father, we ask that the Holy Spirit would move with might and power and deep conviction in this service. Father, we are so glad that we do not have to think, well, we've come and we hope that you show up.

That, Father, you are almost always more ready to move with power than we are to receive that power. You are always more ready to speak than we are to listen. You are always more ready to listen than we are to speak.

And that even our speaking and our listening is a gift from you. So we ask, Father, that your Holy Spirit would move with power within us, that we might be honest about our questions, that you might fan into flame within us a deep longing and yearning to know you and to be known by you.

And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. Some of you have never heard the Athanasian Creed before.

I like to call it, I should have had Matt give a bit of an introduction. We've switched our, I wanted to have that creed in it so we're not having a gospel text. I'm preaching on the Colossians text, which Shane read so brilliantly, so powerfully.

[1 : 1 1] And if you listen to that text and it talks about Jesus, that creed is a bit of an explanation, a further reflection upon what the Bible was teaching.

So if you're not familiar with it, you can Google it, Athanasian Creed. It's well worth reflection. So I don't know how many of you are listening very carefully. It's not a test, not a quiz.

It's, as Shane read, Colossians chapter 1, verses 15 to 20. But if you did, then for Canadians living today, when you hear this text, it is a very hard passage for Canadians.

It's a hard passage for some who've grown up in very conservative evangelical churches. It would be a main reason why many Canadians are not Christians, because the text, in fact, completely and utterly goes against naturalistic evolution.

And, in fact, actually, it's almost like people, Christians are, just even for me to say naturalistic evolution and Christianity in many people creates tension, a little bit of worry, because it's one of those things that, for a lot of us Christians, we'd rather not think about.

[2 : 2 8] We'd rather just sort of park it out there and not have to think about it. But the fact of the matter is, is that given that naturalistic evolution, as taught everywhere, and this is how Canadians would think it, naturalistic evolution is taught in elementary school, high school, university.

It's taught by the media. It's taught by entertainment. And it's viewed as being scientifically true. Doesn't that mean that the text that we just read is wrong in a serious way?

That's the question. Now, if you think I'm making this up or making it look more difficult than it is, let's open the Bible and have a look at it. And for some of us who don't have Bibles, if you need a Bible, by the way, there's Bibles here as a gift.

You have to keep it if you take it, but we'd love it if you had a Bible, if you didn't have one already. Look at the text. And I'll just read the text through once. I'm going to draw out a couple of things from it.

But you'll see that it's not as if it's saying, in fact, it's a very inconvenient text for a lot of Christians. Because it's not as if it says, you know, creation, and it sort of slips in there once.

[3 : 38] And you see it with a little quick, quiet voice, hoping that nobody notices. In fact, this doctrine of creation is trumpeted by the text.

So listen to it again. The sun, that's the he, the sun is the image or the icon, that's the Greek word, of the invisible God.

The firstborn of all creation. Now just pause there. Even the very word creation implies that there's a creation and that there's a creator who's created the creation.

It doesn't say he's the firstborn of the world or he's the firstborn of everything or he's the firstborn of the planet or anything like that. It actually uses this word creation, which implies, well, that everything that exists has been created by a creator.

I'll read it again. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him, all things were created. And not only does he create all things, just to make it clear, the writer says, He created in heaven and all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities.

[4 : 54] All things were created, said another time, through him and for him. And I'm not going to talk at all really about this during the sermon, but that little bit about thrones, dominions, rulers or authorities or four different ranks or classes of angelic beings.

Okay? But we're not going to talk about that. But we're going to talk about that in a couple of weeks when the topic comes back up later on. But listen again, the end of verse 16. All things were created through him and for him.

And he is before all things, which implies creation. And in him, all things hold together, which once again implies creation.

And in fact, it actually implies something else because, you know, there's this wonderful Bible text in 1 Corinthians that says that if Jesus hasn't risen from the dead, we of all human beings are most to be pitied.

And if, in fact, we have a text and we claim that a man who's dead is the one who holds everything together, to believe that a man who is dead holds everything together is another word for delusion and delusional.

[6 : 07] So this text is making a very, very, very stark claim. And then it goes to continue. It gets, in a sense, to the safer religious part. But if you notice, and this is a very inconvenient truth, the text, and it's just like John chapter 1.

It's just like Hebrews chapter 1. It's just like lots of places in the Bible. The Bible very clearly connects the doctrine of creation with the doctrine of salvation. So, in other words, if it's wrong about creation, it's going to be wrong about salvation.

If it's wrong about the resurrection, it's definitely wrong about all things being held together by him. Like, it's just wrong. I mean, that's what we have to say if we have a brain. Listen to what happened.

So it goes from the creation, very, very stark term. And by the way, this is Jehovah Witness. This is a Jehovah Witness graveyard, by the way, this whole text. Because it's said in so many different ways very clearly this claim that God, the Son of God, is the second person of the Trinity.

And then verse 18, And he, that is the Son, that is Jesus, is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

[7 : 19] Listen to verse 19. And the word there, dwell, is actually the same word for tabernacle.

In other words, just as in the Old Testament it was believing that God was in some ways, in some sense, present in the tabernacle in the middle of his people, that in fact, actually all of God's fullness, all of God's fullness, with nothing left over, in fact, dwells, tabernacles in the Son.

Read verse 19 again. And by the way, that's actually a very shocking thing.

We'll talk about that at the end of the sermon. Going from these high, what we would consider to be abstractions of the creation and sustaining of all things, down to blood on a cross is a very jarring move.

And it's intentional, obviously, by the author. So, I mean, I don't have hours to talk about this, but the fact of the matter is that most Canadians would say that science has clearly settled the idea that science has discovered how all things have come to be.

[8 : 41] And all things have come to be, fundamentally, through a combination of randomness and randomness working on the basic normal principles of matter.

There's no direction. There's no purpose. It's just random. And then once out of randomness life developed, then the continued development of all things is still randomness, but it's randomness connected with this mechanism called natural selection.

And that accounts for the creation, for the existence of all things. That's just what would be taught. If I was to say that at Ottawa, you, people would say, yeah, that's right.

Say that in your high school biology class, they'd say, yep, that's right. Say it to the CBC, the National Post. Yep, that's right. But here the Bible is saying that all things haven't come about by such a mechanism.

That's what it's saying. So what do we do? So I want to just think about a couple of... Here's one of the things about me.

[9 : 49] Here's one of the things about me. And it's maybe just the peculiarity of me. Maybe it's the peculiarity of my vocation. And the sermon's not about me. But I think it's important for Christians to recognize when they have either an oil or water view, that they sort of have a little religious view, and then there's their science view.

And the Bible doesn't allow that. And it's best if we walk towards things that make us anxious about the biblical text. In fact, that's partially what church should be about, not just the worship on Sunday mornings.

That's why small groups are so important. That's why having mentoring and discipleship relationships are so important, where you have a context, a safe place, where you can help people say, you know what, to be honest, we have a fear around this, don't we?

Let's walk towards it so we can understand what the Bible teaches, and let's help each other to understand it. That's once again why church is important, why small groups are important, that we can walk towards things that make us anxious.

So here's the first thing. This doctrine or teaching of evolution is a challenge to all worldviews, all religions, all spiritualities, and all ideologies, not just Christians.

[11 : 08] Now this is something which nobody in our culture recognizes. The way our, you know, people talk about social construction of knowledge. Sorry, I just lost some of you for a moment. But the fact of the matter is that people think that that's, I've had this conversation time and time and time and time again with people in coffee shops, where they think that somehow applies to me but not to them, as if somehow or another they're exempt.

Or if they come up with a challenge to the Christian worldview, that they somehow or other think that they don't have to come up with an account of that reality. But the fact of the matter is, just think about it for a second with the issue of racism.

If naturalistic evolution is true, why isn't racism fine? Like, why not? If white people are in power, why should I give that up?

Like, why? If naturalistic evolution is true, if human beings are just a product of accident, if human beings might not have developed, if randomness had worked in a particular way, if there's nothing inherently special about human beings, and in fact, if actually the fundamental thing that accounts for the reality of all things is an account that the strong survive and the weak don't, and that often the strong survive and the weak don't because the strong eat the weak, then why should we believe in, why is racism wrong?

Like, why are there human rights? Like all critical theory, well, why don't they have to deal with evolution? Like native spirituality, why doesn't that have to deal with evolution?

[12 : 44] Like, the fact of the matter is, is that this scientific account is something that every system of thought has to answer. This is always an important thing for us to remember because sometimes when we try to account for the Christian faith, it might not sound perfect, but you know what?

I would suggest that every single time you'd give the Christian account of a problem and compare it to other accounts, you'd end up saying, gosh, that's a good account.

That's the best account. I mean, native spirituality has no way of dealing with evolution, nor does Hinduism or Buddhism, nor does Islam, and definitely not Marxism and feminism and transgender and social justice warriors.

None of those things. They've not even begun to ask those questions in terms of how you give an account in light of this. So it's not just a question that Christians have to answer. Everybody has to answer it. And here's the second one.

The second thing is that naturalistic evolution is in trouble because of science. Naturalistic evolutionary theory is in trouble because of science.

[13 : 52] Because the more science develops, that particular account that everything is due to randomness, interacting with particular, the properties of stuff, and then naturalistic selection, accounting for the growth after life has developed randomly, the fact of the matter is is that as science develops, that entire theory is problematic.

You see, one of the problems is, for instance, the Big Bang, which is what science has now come to believe, that combined with the well-known law of the second law of thermodynamics that everything is running down, those two truths mean that you have to have a creator.

Like the Big Bang means that things haven't existed forever. Part of the entire argument for evolution is that if you have forever, then anything can happen, including this.

But you don't have forever. Science has now shown that doesn't happen. Things aren't forever. There was a beginning. But the fact of the matter, not only is there a beginning, but there's this contradictory thing that doesn't actually explain how you could ever have a Big Bang because the second law of thermodynamics shows that everything is running down.

And not only that, and this is a far more important thing, is that the further science goes to develop, can take science between now and when naturalistic evolutionary theory was first propounded by Darwin, is the more that scientists study, the more they see design, and not just design, but intricate design that is irreducible.

[15 : 24] A couple of weeks ago, Daniel gave the illustration of the mousetrap, and that's a very, very simple thing of something which is irreducible, where you need wood, you need pegs, you need a spring, you need a spring to be armed, you need an arm to keep the other arm down, you need peanut butter.

And the fact of the matter is, is that the more science studies things, they see something like a mousetrap already put together. In other words, you don't just find pieces of wood and pieces of metal and pieces of this and pieces of that, but to have an actual mousetrap, you need it all to be put together and armed.

And just talk to some of the people in the room here who are scientists and who are doctors, and they'll tell you that you go into things, what you discover, as science, as biology progresses, as genetics progress, what they find is irreducible complexity, and it's not just complexity, it's complexity that is clearly best understood as a design feature.

So the fact of the matter is, and this is something which people don't want to talk about, but as science progresses, the theory becomes far more complicated. The third problem is that we don't actually believe in the account of naturalistic evolution anywhere else.

And it's sort of ironic because the big, big, big, big, big thing which we believe it in, when it comes to small things, nobody believes it. Nobody believes it. Not one single person on the planet believes it.

[16 : 48] Perfect illustration. I've used it before. Let's say there's a young man in this congregation, and he's been dating a young woman, and he wants to ask her to marry him, and he knows that this young woman loves going for walks.

In fact, there's a particular, it doesn't matter if it's young or old, just a man and a woman, and they know that there's a particular place that they love to walk. And so the man comes up with this idea, you know how I'm going to do it to ask her to marry me in a way which is just, I think, just so cool.

You might think it's corny, but he thinks it's cool. How about me and a buddy, there's this really lovely place where you come for a walk, and there's a bit of a green hill just on the side, and why don't you and I get some field stones, and with the field stones, spell out, Sue, will you marry me?

Bob. And so you think, well, that's the coolest thing in the world. Let's do it. So you go there, you get the stones, you know, and the field stones, you make all that little pattern, so it's very, very clear.

You know, you look, people walk by and say, what are you doing? You say, I want to ask this woman, Sue, to marry me. Oh, way to go. Sounds cool, whatever. Sounds lame, or whatever. And then, you know, you do it, and you keep your buddy in the background, so no person comes and moves all the stones, or something like that, you know, and says, you know, will you sue me, Bob, or whatever, you know.

[18 : 07] But it keeps the message, the message in the right order, right? Because if you put Sue in the wrong spot, it'll think you want to sue a person, you just can't spell. But anyway, you know what I mean, right? Or you move the letters, it looks all completely different.

And so finally, the man and the young woman, they're coming, they're holding hands, and as they come to the spot, he sort of nudges her, so she looks over, and if she looks over it, and then keeps walking with no comment, and then you say, well, what do you think about that sign?

She said, you know, there was an earth tremor the other day, it's the weirdest thing in the world, that that earth tremor caused field stones to go in that pattern. Like, who'd believe that?

You know what? If that actually happened to you, you could get people buying you beer for years just to tell the story of the crazy woman who didn't recognize the field stones saying the message.

Right? And let me ask Jeremiah afterwards how more complex DNA is to that. Like, it's not just like twice as complicated, it's like exponentially more complicated.

[19 : 13] Nobody believes the theory. Anywhere else. If we got a message from space that was going beep, beep, beep, beep, in a certain type of pattern, very, very simple, we'd know that there was something out there.

And yet when it comes to the origins of all things, we believe this theory. And here's the final thing I'd like to say. The fact of the matter is, is that this passage of Scripture is profoundly wise and wonderful and fits with science and the Bible and our experience and in fact encourages science.

Now, I've said before, and I'm not arguing against the literal reading of Genesis chapter 1, but what I think is that the discussion between Christians and the world should have focused on texts like this where John chapter 1 where it says, in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.

He was with God in the beginning. All things were made through him and without him nothing was made that was made. In him was life and the life was the light of men. And Christians should have had our conversations with our secular friends over John 1 and Colossians 1 verses 15 to 20 and Hebrews 1 verses 1 to 3.

And that's where we should have had the discussion. And here's the wonderful thing about the doctrine of creation. The doctrine of creation tells us both that God creates all things, but it doesn't tell us anything about how deep creation is or how big the backstory is until we look.

[20 : 53] I'll give you two illustrations of what I mean by that because you probably don't understand it. This insight came in, and I don't know, I can't really say this. Maybe we should turn it off for a second. No, don't turn it off for a second. You know, Andrew hangs around sometimes after the service.

He puts things on the screen. Am I allowed to say that? I'm going to get in trouble. Anyway, he does. He puts music or something. So maybe, if those of you who know Star Trek and those of you who know Q, go back and go on Google or look on YouTube for some episode in Star Trek where Q shows up.

And one of the things that Q can do in that is he makes everything, he makes a whole pile of things out of nothing. I remember one clip, I'm not really a Star Trek person, I watch it occasionally, that all of a sudden Q would make it look like the entire crew of Star Trek was like Robin Hood.

All of a sudden, there are horses riding through the woods. Now, the viewer knows that Q just invented that out of nothing three minutes earlier. But they're not riding on horses that are three minutes old.

They're riding on five-year-old horses. The trees that are all around them aren't three minutes old. If you cut down a tree, it would have the rings. It would show that the tree is in fact very, very old. In fact, part of the episodes are that the crew is always trying to figure out if it's an hallucination, is it a vision, what's going on, but the things they read, like, right?

[22 : 09] I have that right, right? Everything seems to work. Like, it seems to be completely and utterly real. And what that means is if you went into a world that a situation that Q is just created out of nothing and you brought all of your science and you cut down the trees and the trees might have 80 rings, 100 rings, 150 rings, 20 rings.

It's a certain time of the year that, like, there's stuff on the ground because, you know, the leaves and other stuff fell off the tree onto the ground and yet it's only three minutes old. You see, in fact, the matter is is that God could have created things like this set, but he didn't.

Sometimes, when I have one of my younger grandchildren, they get to a certain age and they come to visit from another city and they come to church and in some cases they've asked because kids, in case you didn't know, aren't allowed up on the stage.

So they ask after the service if they can come up on the stage because they're curious because they find it so fascinating that a room that looks real that you can go behind it and it's not real.

And God could have made a universe like that. He's God. If he decided to do it, he could. But the fact of the matter is that the doctrine of creation implies it would be as if, you know, a set designer makes not just a room but a street and streets and a whole city or something like that.

[23 : 37] And the fact of the matter is you don't know how big the creation is until you look but the doctrine of creation just like Star Trek shows it's an odd way to comment on the Bible but it's a good one is that creation out of nothing can have something which is unbelievably deep.

Why did God do it? Well, I don't know why God does it. Those of us in the room, those of you in the room who are scientists, they can say, well, it's really cool, you know. Like knowing this whole back story and depth to creation, that's how we figure out things that help us to figure out diseases.

That's how we figure out things that connect animal research to human beings that allow science to develop and that's how we figure out things about the nature of light and that's how we figure out all of these things and the book of Genesis tells us that God created the earth so that we could tend the earth, that we could be fruitful and multiply, that we could tend the garden and God designed creation whether he made it in six days or in one second, whether he made it 5,771 years ago or whether he made it whatever the length of time is, is that once he created it, it's deep, it's thick, it has a profoundly huge back story and you can't tell by looking at creation actually on one level in a sense how old it is.

Like you can't. But does that mean that and so this is the wonderful thing and in fact this is and it's only been in the Christian worldview that science was able to develop.

there's always been cleverness. People have always been able to figure out how to do this or how to do that or how to do something else but science isn't just being clever. Science is working on theories and making connections and from your theories and connections making new discoveries and that's what science is and science developed out of the Christian worldview because they understood that it was creation designed by an intelligent creator so you go looking for reasons and connections.

[25 : 35] And if we understand that the real battle the real battle is not over whether the earth is young or old that's a really good question but it's not that. The real issue is over whether or not there is a creator who has created all things and sustains all things and that that creator is the triune God and only the triune God can possibly account for it.

That and the alternatives. Once you understand that the doctrine of creation that God's created the world deep, wide, big, thick with a huge backstory you are freed up to discover.

You are launched. Go ahead and be a geologist. Go ahead and be a physicist. Be an astronomer. Don't worry about those things because you're just looking at this wonderful profound world that God has created with a huge backstory and he designed it out of love.

He designed it with intelligence. He designed it with creativity. And look for design and rejoice in it. And the fact of the matter is that design shows that there must be a designer.

Just as seeing Sue, will you marry me Bob implies that somebody wrote that and sustained it. And I spent a long time on this because it's a big problem.

[26 : 53] I just want to suggest that this text propels us or grounds us to launch into mystery and into coherence.

It grounds us as Christians to launch ourselves into the mystery of existence and into coherence.

Listen again to the text. He is the image of the invisible God. Now, the word image is a technical word.

It doesn't mean... It could be that if that's all you had, you'd think, okay, well, there's God and it's his picture. Like, you know, like Lisa would much rather have Andrew than a picture of Andrew.

Like, the picture of Andrew isn't the same as Andrew. And it might be possible that we don't know the philosophical language and you hear that and you think that it's just like a picture of God.

[27 : 56] But it's actually... It's actually really, really important. If you go back and read in Genesis chapter 1, it talks about human beings. One of the reasons that racism is wrong, one of the reasons that anti-Semitism is wrong, one of the reasons that all prejudice and discrimination is wrong, is that out of all of the things that have been created by God, only human beings are made in his image.

And every human being, it doesn't matter if you're from Asia or from Africa or from England or Scotland or Wales, it doesn't matter if you're Inuit, it doesn't matter if you are an indigenous person in Peru, every single human being, it doesn't matter who you are, it doesn't matter how handicapped you are, it doesn't matter how young or how elderly you are, you are made in the image and likeness of the true and living God and have an inherent worth and value that is there by God, not something the state gives you.

The wise state recognizes it and does not try to usurp to itself the power to determine the worth and value of human beings.

It is a feature of totalitarianism and evil to think that only the state can determine your value. Christians have been guilty of horrendous racism, but they should not have read their Bible and been led to that.

They cannot read their Bible and be led to that. This particular, and so you notice, human beings are made in the image of God, but God, the Son of God, is, he's not in thee, he is the image.

[29 : 49] And it's a little tiny bit like, given that the word icon and you use icon now for computers and you click on the icon the way that it doesn't matter what, you know, it's Apple or Microsoft or whatever, you click on the icon and you get the whole thing.

The same sense in the sense when you click on the God, the Son of God, you get all of God. But it's not just this phrase because it doesn't just say this, the rest of it helps to make it clear that that's the way you're to understand it.

And listen to this. The Son is the image, in other words, he's fully God, of the invisible God. It's also telling us that the God who by his very nature is invisible has revealed himself.

We can't figure out the invisible God. Only the invisible God can reveal himself in a way that we can understand it. That's reason to think that by my mysticism, by my technology, by my poetry, by my thinking that I can figure out the invisible is foolish.

The invisible must be made visible. The invisible must make himself visible for me to have a sense of the fullness of the invisible God.

[31 : 02] That's what the text says. He is the image of the invisible God. The firstborn of all creation implies that before creation was, there was the Son. Go back and listen to the Athanasian Creed.

The relationship of the Father to the Son is not that he is made, but begotten. And even the language of firstborn, which Jehovah Witnesses might want to talk about, but here's the entire thing, is we beget what has our nature.

There's three women in the congregation right now who are expecting a child. The child will be human. The child will be human. Begotten.

Not made, but begotten. And firstborn also implies preeminence. 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. In other words, there's a purpose. It isn't just one dang thing after another and then you die.

[32 : 09] And the human race has one thing, dang thing after another and then eventually the sun becomes a huge ball of fire that obliterates all life.

It isn't just one dang thing after another. There is in fact a story with a beginning, a middle, and an end. And if there is a story, there is a possibility of meaning. And if we are made in the image of the invisible God and have a worth and a value and a dignity, it means that there is in fact the possibility of a meaning and purpose for your life and for mine that cannot be found apart from our creator.

and he is before all things, verse 17, and in him all things hold together. You see, that's what I mean by on one hand, this text, it's a very small text, a very simple text.

You can memorize the text. You should memorize the text. But it launches us into this mystery of the bigness and the largeness of the world and also the coherence.

You see, social construction of knowledge and social construction of reality. What is hidden from most Canadians but they feel it at some level is the fundamental incoherence of things.

[33 : 28] You have one way of counting for existence which is naturalistic evolution. You have a completely different, completely and utterly separate from that, different understanding of what it's like after you die and you become some wispy, ethereal, spiritual type of thing.

And in the meantime, you have all of these things if you see the beauty of the world and you see your own longings to either create beauty or enjoy beauty or communicate beauty and you have that.

But how does that fit in with anything else? And then apart from beauty, you have this whole other thing of a concern for justice. And then you have this whole other thing about trying to have things like families and friends and social gatherings and nations that hold together.

But that's not connected to evolution and that's not connected to the end and that's not connected to beauty and that's not necessarily connected to justice although it is in a certain type of a way. And the fact of the matter is that most Canadians live in a world which is incoherent and broken and has no mystery.

You hear the Bible's profound messages the same God who created all things. The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, three persons, one God who's created through the Son.

[34 : 43] That same God reveals His existence in the person of the Son in a way that can be seen. And the same God who's created all things is the same God who holds all things together.

And the same God who's created all things who holds all things together is the same one who will bring is central to the purpose of all things and the end of all things.

And all of the Greek words that use the telos word implying an end are the same words in the original language of Greek that's used for beauty. that the end of all things is beautiful.

Like it's beautiful. Beauty isn't something separate. Beauty is woven into everything and we know that but it's coherent within this Christian worldview.

And since all things are held together through Him that means that justice and mercy and goodness and truth and beauty and family and friends and neighbors and nations that there is this possibility that there is at the heart of all things broken and marred by the fall by sin and evil which has come into the world through human beings through Adam and Eve and then for every single other human being that adds to the bentness and the brokenness of the world but before all these things at the end of all things and held together even now in brokenness and scarring is this same God who holds all things together the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and the same God who creates and sustains the same God who is the source of beauty and of justice and truth and mercy and love and community and friendship and life who is the God of life is the same God the very same God who redeems and no Christian has to choose between being saved and being smart between being saved and doing art between being saved and pursuing justice between being saved and working in the government to see a just social order or in business to create a just economy you don't have to choose between things because the same one who saves is the same one who is the source of creation the source of beauty of meaning of truth and that's too big for any one person to do there's this mystery this mystery profound mystery of coherence of this unending vistas that we can enter into and it's the same one who opens our eyes to these unending vistas and grounds our longings and our yearnings is the same one the same one who takes on flesh and dies a death of crucifixion at a point in time in history and sheds his blood in the mystery of the gospel can't you see it's only if you understand this that you understand how it is that this one death can fix all creation listen to verses 18 and he is the head of the body it goes from these wonderful things he is the head of the body what is the body it's the church this means it's in a sense it's the church it's the same church you and I have a local church but we are connected to other true believers in Christ in all the other gospel shaped churches and we're also connected to the true believers in Christ that have worshipped today in Sydney

[38 : 22] Australia in Nairobi in Nairobi in Kenya and in Singapore and in Beijing and in Vancouver later on in the day and in Japan we're all part of that not only that but we're also we're part of the same body as Augustine who's been dead hundreds of years and Calvin and Mother Teresa and Francis of Assisi and Billy Graham just one body the church but he is the head of that body the church he is the beginning the first born from the dead because the God who truly does exist is a God of life not a God of death death is a result of sin and God saw our death and our sin and our inability to deal with it and out of love and justice and mercy and compassion acted to do what we could not do for ourselves but to reconcile us to him that in everything he might be preeminent for in verse 19 for in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell and such a wonderful phrase right look at this how it goes 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 only the creator can count for all of the creation only the gospel is the means by which a human being can be made right with God by faith and trust in him and to receive the gospel you go and you look at the world this is my father's world

I wonder about quarks I wonder about DNA I wonder about dance I wonder about business I wonder about government I wonder about how I can speak against racism I wonder how I can act against abortion I wonder what I can do to make things more prosperous I wonder about how I can bear witness to Jesus I wonder how I can share how wonderful it is that he died on the cross for me and wants you to receive him too that's the world you enter into friends please stand Andrew if you could put up the general thanksgiving thanksgiving I think this general thanksgiving was written by Cramner back in the 1540s that's a long time ago and I think in many ways we're going to say this prayer we're going to pray this prayer every Sunday at the end of the sermon while we're going through

Colossians I think it brilliantly encapsulates so much of the Christian message and so much of what the book of Colossians is trying to communicate for us so I invite you to pray it with me and then I'll just say an extemporaneous prayer in closing before I think it's Matt who's coming up to lead the intercessions let's pray join with me almighty God father of all mercies we than unworthy servants do give you most humble and hearty thanks for all your goodness and loving kindness to us and to all people we bless you for our creation preservation and all the blessings of this life but above all for your inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ for the means of grace and for the hope of glory and we beseech you give us that due sense of all your mercies that our hearts may be unfaintedly thankful and that we show forth your praise not only with our lips but in our lives by giving up ourselves to your service and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days through

Jesus Christ our Lord to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be all honor and glory world without end amen father thank you for the gospel thank you for your word thank you for science thank you father for those in this room who you've blessed with fine minds for science for mathematics for medicine for government for good public service for good business for art thank you for various vocations for various vocations to live in such a way that we are always thankful for Jesus and can bear witness to him and all this we ask in the name of Jesus and all God's people said amen thank you so much for Ciao■ my