

The Head

Colossians 1:17

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Introduction

Have you ever had one of those “what is it all about” moments? What does it all mean? You know where you have a real coming to terms with yourself and ask “what is the purpose or point of it all?”

I’ve had that experience at three distinct points in my life. The first was as a young man off on my own and in college for the first time. I had been riding the waves of the pleasures of the world for a few years had begun finding their offerings unsatisfying and unfulfilling. Plus I was faced with the harsh reality of what I was going to do with my life.

I ended up becoming a Christian and quite to my surprise I ended up becoming a pastor and starting this church in 2005. The first two years of the church went terribly wrong. I had no idea what I was doing. We lived with another married couple, but the guy cheated on his wife and became a drug addict.

I started the church with a guy I met in Seminary, which is basically Bible college. He led the worship the first couple of years until I found out he was sleeping with three different girls in the church. About the same time, I discovered the other two leaders of our core team were addicted to pornography.

I looked around at our small church and was pretty convinced no one in the church was even a Christian besides my wife and I. I figured I’d definitely missed it on this church thing and had my second real “what is it all about” “what’s the point” moment.

Despite feeling like it I didn’t throw in the towel and pressed on with the church and in the last ten years, there’s been some real highs, some great things and then some real lows and really challenging things. And I haven’t really asked the “what is it all about” question in a long time until recently as I’ve been dealing with the death of a friend and the serious financial situation our church is in.

It seems to me it’s at really critical stages of life, often times when faced with failure and hardship or with achieving unfulfilling success that forces us to ask the “what is it all about” question. If you ask the life coach guru experts and philosophers they say there are basically six different answers people have to the question. In his book “What’s It All About? Philosophy & The Meaning of Life” Julian Baggini says it’s either about:

(1) Helping Others - The point of life is to turn away from self and turn to serve others.

(2) Progressing Humanity - The point of life is to make some contribution to the evolution of the human race towards us becoming better people.

(3) Being Happy - The point of life is to feel good. So you pursue pleasure and do whatever you want.

(4) Being Successful - The point of life is to achieve, typically in status, money, and possessions.

(5) No Point - Everything is meaningless so it doesn't matter what you do.

(6) Freeing Your Mind - The point of life is about something or someone greater than you.

Which one of these do you most identify with? In the section of the Bible we're going to be looking at today from the book of Colossians we're studying together as a church this year, the answer it gives is this sixth one. What we're going to see today is the Bible's claim that ultimately everything is about Jesus Christ, that our church, our life, and our glory or worth is all about Jesus and we will never really be successful, happy, progress or even really help anyone if we're not seeing that Jesus is the point.

Let's go ahead and read the passage. Would you stand with me in recognition of the Bible being a gift, ultimately given to us by God for our good?

Colossians 1:18

"He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent."

If this is one of your first times here I want to say I'm glad you came. We hope you have a wonderful time this morning as a guest in God's house. My name is Duane, I'm one of six pastors here, who all serve together under our Head Pastor Jesus. My main job is preaching, I'm the preaching pastor and I'd love to meet you.

What I want to do today is simply move through each of the three things our verse for today mentions, the church, life from death and preeminent glory and the theme, or what I think the Bible really wants us to see and believe today is that "it's all about Jesus...it's all about Jesus."

Let's jump in with this first point, "The Head of Church."

I. The Head of Church

The word “head” is all over the Bible, mentioned over 400 times and it can refer to a lot of things.

It can be a physical head that you put a helmet on in a battle to protect you from blows, but you could also get your head cut off if you lost. Lots of things happen with heads, you can bow your head in worship or receive blessings. In times of grief and mourning, people would shave their heads and sprinkle ashes on it. When they came out of that time they would lift up their heads in hope.

Head could also be a symbol denoting authority, respect or honor. You had the head of a household, the head of tribes and the head of nations. When a new king was installed they would anoint his head dumping a bottle of oil on it.

Thinking about all the different ways the Bible uses the word “head” got me thinking about all the different ways we use it. We get headaches, wear headphones and sometimes just need some headspace. There’s constantly news headlines about heads of state and we’re all just trying to get ahead. But the most favorite head of all is, of course, Mr. Potato Head. “Mr. Potato head and a bucket of fun, for everyone!”

Now our verse today is in the middle of a paragraph we’re moving through real slow, just doing a little bit of it each week. That’s because each line is just so packed with meaning and significance we thought it best to go slow and really take it in.

The first word in our text today is “He”, “He is the head of the body, the church.” If we go backward and pick up everything that been said about this “He” in the book so far this is what we’ve learned:

Verse 3-4: He is the Lord Jesus Christ

Verse 13: He is the Son of God and a King

Verse 14: He redeems people and forgives sin

Verse 16: He is the Creator who made all things

Verse 17: He is the sustainer who holds everyone and everything in the universe together.

He is some pretty big things. The immediate paragraph we’re in moves from the cosmos to the church. Which I don’t think is the way our minds normally work. I don’t think when we think about creation and the universe that the next most important thing that comes to mind is... church. We usually think of church being way farther down on the list of things of importance.

Of all the things in we have going on in life, in all the options of what we can do with our time, church is typically pretty low on the priority list. Sleeping in, going out to breakfast, just chilling out, or getting some more work down...or sports, sports is a big one either playing things like

baseball, volleyball or soccer or watching football...all these things often take priority and are treated as far more important than church.

I think in our culture we typically think of “church” as an option of what we could do with our Sunday morning, not something that our souls desperately need every week and definitely not something that is of next importance after the creation and continuance of the universe. But God does. How do you think of church?

Recognizing this tendency in our culture, in our own church and at times in my own heart and life got me thinking this week, why? Why is it that we have such a hard time thinking church is of utmost importance?

So I read a couple books on it this week. One book is titled “Churchless” which came out a couple years is based on 20 years of statistical research and surveys. Their reports say church attendance across the nation is way down. In fact, more churches are shutting their doors than ever before. The most common reasons given for why people are not interested in church are:

“(The most common reasons given for why people are not interested in church are) petty jealousies, impractical teaching, second-rate events, and hypocritical behaviors witnessed in congregational life. Nearly half of churchless people attribute their lack of church attendance to an absence of value. They either have no interest, no reason, are too busy, can practice faith at home, and have not found a church they like. Less than one in ten could identify anything from their last church experience they considered insightful, valuable, helpful or memorable.”

The next book I read was an older book, written in 1972 called “Body Life” written by Ray Stedman. It’s considered a classic by most studied pastors. The first chapter of the book is titled, “The Most Powerful Force On Earth” and he opens the chapter by saying that when most people hear the word “church” they often think of:

“Church” Connotations:

- *A snooty religious country club, bound by strange, almost secret rituals, traditions, and jargon.*
- *A political action group, waging war on behalf of a social agenda (either to the left or the right).*
- *A waiting room, where people wait expectantly but rather passively for the next bus to heaven.*
- *A collection of hypocrites who care more about expensive equipment and buildings than they do about the hurting and hungry in the world.*
- *A place where religious junkies gather to get their ‘feel good fix’ so they can get through another week.*
- *A collection of sanctimonious killjoys who want to legislate morality for the rest of the world.”*

Dang. Sounds about right, right? I mean that was written 46 years ago and it about hits the nail on the head and is saying the same thing the current data is reporting, just on a much bigger scale now.

So what's going on? If God has such a high view of church, next in order of importance after creation itself then why does the church look so pathetic to so many? The answer Stedman gives is that there are really two churches. Here's what he says,

“What we call ‘the church’ is really two churches.

One is selfish, power-hungry, and sinful. The other is loving, forgiving, and Godly. One has a long history of stirring up hatred, conflict, and bloody persecution, all in the name of God and religion. The other has always sought to heal human hurts, break down barriers of race and class, and deliver men and women from their guilt, shame, fear, and ignorance.

One is a false church, a counterfeit, masquerading as Christianity, but whose head is Satan. The other is the true church, founded by Jesus Christ, mirroring His authentic character through acts of love, self-sacrifice, courage, and truth.”

I think he's right and I think we could summarize the problem is that when we think of “church” we don't think about Jesus. We tend to think about the preacher, the programs, the building or the band...but, not Jesus. So the solution then is easy, when we think of church what we need to see is that it's all about Jesus! Church is all about Jesus, that's what it's about!

The word “church” literally means “called out ones.” So church is a group of people who assemble together because they are responding to Jesus' call and coming to Him.

John Stott, one of my favorite theologians said, “The church lies at the very center of the purpose of God. It is not a divine afterthought. It is not an accident of history.”

Edmund Clowney who has perhaps written the best book on the church, in my opinion, calls church the “colony of heaven” says, “Christ is the head of his body as a heavenly assembly. When we come together we join everyone who calls on the name of the Lord Jesus.” So when we gather on Sunday we are joining the chorus of angels, those who have gone to heaven and saints who are gathering all around the world doing the exact same thing at the same time!

You see Christianity is not about its followers but about its founder. The Church belongs to Jesus, it's His. There is no such thing as church apart from Christ and His people gathered together, that's why you can't just have church at home.

And Jesus loves His church, no matter what. Despite her spots and wrinkles and blemishes, despite her faults and failures, despite church being a group of sinners and imperfect people Jesus loves her, He gave His body for her.

Ephesians 5:25, 29-30 says it this way,

“Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her... No one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.”

Every one of us cares for our body. You can't not. Every time you eat and drink you're caring for your body. Every time you take a shower and dress in clothes you're caring for your body.

We have such a tendency to focus on all the negative things about church. What's funny is God sees all of that and more, with perfect sight, He knows all the problems, but listen to the ways He talks about the church.

He calls it His vine and branches (John 15:5).

He calls it His flock of sheep (John 10:14-16; 1 Peter 5:4).

He calls it His home (Luke 19:46; 1 Peter 2:4-8).

He calls it His bride (Ephesians 5:25; Revelation 19:7; 21:2,7; 22:17).

He calls it His body (Romans 12:4-5; Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18).

So question. How might it change the way we see and treat church if we truly saw Jesus as the head of the church in these ways?

If you're a branch you wouldn't cut yourself off from the tree or you'd die. If you're a sheep you wouldn't run away from the flock because you'd get eaten by wolves. If you're a family member you're not going to live on the streets homeless when you have a bed in Jesus' house. If you're in a marriage you're not going to go sleep with other lovers. If you're a member of the body you're not going to cut off your head.

What might God be wanting to do in you today in the way you see and treat church?

It's all about Jesus. Church is all about Jesus and we desperately need Him. The Church is the central place and force God has committed Himself to work through. The Church is the whole reason God came to earth, to die for, save and create the Church. Church is more important than your job, your marriage, your family, your money, your free time, it's more important than anything because it's all about Jesus and Jesus is all about the Church.

Well, let's move to our second point, "The Head of Life."

II. The Head of Life

Here we're looking at the next part of our verse which says, "He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead..." The movement here is from the group focus of the church to the individual focus and its connection.

The story of the Bible begins with the first man was named Adam, often referred to as the head of the human race. Adam was to see God as first in His life and to use the garden's resources to create a city and develop a church community with his family. Instead, Adam fell into the lure of pleasure and power that led him away from God and God's purposes and we've been following in his footsteps ever since.

That was a pretty big deal to God, so God said that humans would no longer be immortal but would die and we've been fighting and looking for a solution to death ever since. God is just so He couldn't just let it go but He loved His mankind, He loved His creation.

So God sent His only Son Jesus to earth as a second Adam, to be a different kind of head, one who would not fail the human race but restore it to life. When Jesus came to earth He did not fall prey to the lures of pleasure and prestige but instead used His divine power to live a perfect life, the one we've all failed at and then allow His body to be killed on a cross, offering up an eternal death in order to put an end to death.

Three days later Jesus rose again, the very first time it ever occurred in human history. So our verse in Colossians calls it the "firstborn from the dead." The promise Jesus then offers is all who look to Him and believe in Him will experience new life, His life working in them and a life that will cause them to rise too when they die. This is the promise and hope of Christianity.

In our last point, we mainly talked about Jesus being the head in terms of Him being the chief authority, the one who is over the church and what church is all about and for. In this point, we're talking about Jesus being the head in terms of Him being a life-giving source to the members of His body, which are all those who believe in Him.

You see what happens when we believe is we enter into this relationship with God and we experience new life, a new kind of life, an eternal life. And what happens in that relationship is we end up feeling closer to God because there is a new union where we are joined to Him. We become part of the tree, we join the flock, we are welcomed into the family, we make a marriage like commitment and we become part of Christ' body.

Romans 12:4-5 in the Bible explains it this way,

"As in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another."

In this human body analogy, we're all different parts of the body, some are legs, some are arms, some are hands, some are feet and Jesus is the head. If you think about it the way the human body works is the brain, which is in your head is what controls everything, it's constantly sending

messages throughout our nervous system communicating life and direction to every part of the body. It's all interconnected.

Jesus as the head is the one who constantly giving life and direction to us, the body. And this is more than just an analogy. Christ Jesus and his people are a living entity. Ever since Jesus rose there is a supernatural way in which He is able to be connected to all of us.

There was a guy named Saul after the church first got started who did not like Christians at all and made it his mission to go around killing Christians and trying to shut churches down. He was on a trip to the next stop and the risen Jesus appeared to him in the road and said, "Saul, why are you persecuting me." So when Christians hurt, it hurts Jesus, He feels it.

It's also why one of the ways the Bible talks about being a Christian is by saying it means you are "in Christ." When a person is baptized in water it's a crossing of the line where you cup up out of the water no longer living life on your own by yourself but from that point on "in Christ", in His body with the family of believers.

And this is a wonderful thing. I think it speaks to something we feel deeply and long for intensely. To belong.

There is something in all of us that desperately wants to be a part of something, something that counts, something that is bigger than ourselves. We're looking for our place and where we fit in. I believe what we're looking for and longing for is Jesus, to belong to Him and His people. That's where we receive and experience life.

Life ultimately is all about Jesus. Jesus is the one who first created life as the Creator of all things and Jesus is the one who has provided for new life, where we experience true happiness, purpose, success, and can truly help others. Life is all about Jesus.

I'm convinced for that no one in this room will experience the life they long for, true life, apart from finding life in Christ. I'm convinced that our lives will not go well or be well apart from living in and loving Jesus Christ. (repeat)

Today if you're a Christian and you're hurting, Jesus knows and He hurts and grieves with you because you are in Him and He is in you.

Today if you're a Christian and you feel lost and alone, Jesus is with you. He has promised to never leave us nor forsake us and doesn't because we are in Him always, no matter what and when we're with His people we feel that. That's why community groups are such a good thing.

Today if you're a Christian and you're wondering if anything you're doing matters, the answer is yes. You are a part of something so much bigger and by being involved in Jesus' church you belong and doing something that counts for eternity. That's why serving on a ministry team is such a good thing.

And today if you're not a Christian, all these things can be yours by looking to and believing Jesus Christ. In Him we have a savior who weeps with us in the hard times, is with us in whatever we do and wherever we go and who allows us to belong to something so much bigger than ourselves and our little lives.

Being a Christian is truly a wonderful thing because it's all about Jesus and Jesus gives us everything.

Well, that brings us to our final point for today, "The Head of Glory."

III. The Head of Glory

Ever since I can remember I've liked to win. I don't like losing. It doesn't matter what the game is. Scrabble, Sorry, Monopoly, even playing Memory with my five-year-old, she's too good at it and it really irks me. I know it's bad, so when I'm playing with my kids and I lose I have to act like it doesn't bother me. But it does. I hate losing.

My wife and I used to go on runs together, but then she got better than me. So we don't run together anymore, because I want to be first.

I'm not sure what it looks like in you and in your life but I think this desire for attention, recognition, esteem runs in all of us. A guy named JR Vassar calls it glory hunger.

I'm taking this point, "The Head of Glory" from the last part of our verse for today which says the goal is "...that in everything he might be preeminent."

Preeminent is a word which means first place, an exclusive right, He and He alone. Our passage then is calling us to see and recognize that Jesus the Head is first, above all, so He deserves all of our praise, worship and all of our lives. But that's really hard for us, because of this thing called glory hunger.

JR Vassar wrote the book called "Glory Hunger" talking about this. He says,

"Our glory hunger is a desire to possess greatness and have others respond to it. We want to be perceived as impressive and be affirmed as significant and important. Deep down we want glory. Our glory hunger has made us slaves to the applause of people."

It's funny, in the scope of human history the span of our lives is an infinitesimal little blip on the map. Even among all the other people on the planet, each of our lives is just one among billions and billions of people all clamoring for significance and glory. In light of that, it's simply ridiculously silly to think we really matter that much and are that great.

In contrast, consider Jesus Christ. He created everything, came to earth to redeem everything and is working to perfect everything making all things new.

Listen to how someone speaks who is truly worthy of glory. Revelation 21:6 “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty, I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment.”

The story of Jesus is one where He shunned glory. He deserved it as the Creator of the world, but came as poor carpenter, only occasionally using and showing His vast divine power. Then in a stroke of utter humility, He uses His power to lay down His life on a cross to die for a bunch of hungry glory thieves.

Then, what He does is rather than gloat and telling everyone how much better He is, instead, He chooses to share His glory. He shares His inheritance, giving away the reward of heaven and then He lifts up the heads of all who look to Him in faith.

You see Jesus is preeminent, there’s nothing that could make Him more preeminent than He already is. What He wants is to see His preeminence and in so doing share in it as the light of His glory shines upon us.

Vassar explains it this way in his book,

“ When the glory and renown of God revealed in creation and in His Son are the delight of our hearts, and when the ruling desire of our hearts is for his fame and honor to increase in the earth, the desire for our own glory and fame is drowned out. Our narcissistic glory hunger is decimated in a vision of God’s uncontested glory.

Spiritually we are born majoring on ourselves. We are fixated on our name, honor, and glory. But when God opens our eyes to the beauty, supremacy, and glory of His Son in His life, death, resurrection, and exaltation, our interest shifts, and our major changes. Our hearts get lit up by a vision of the glory of God in Christ, and we find it to be more compelling than our own, experiencing the expulsive power of a new affection.”

I think what it boils down to is experiencing freedom from our fears, guilt, and shame by giving Jesus the first place in our hearts and in our lives. It’s so much more freeing for everything to be all about Him rather than us. We’re not built for that kind of pressure and attention.

The call then is for Jesus and His glory to be...

First in our pursuits.
First in our professions.
First in our pleasures.
First in our friendships.
First in our finances.
First in our families.
First in our marriages.
First in our service.
First in our intellect.

First in our feelings.
First in our time.
First in our talents.
First in our loves.
First in our conversation.
First in our eating and drinking.
First in our attention.
First in our leisure.
First in our music.
First in our worship.
First in our church.

Let's give Him first place because it belongs to Him and Him alone. Amen? You guys with me on that?

Il wrap up this sermon point today with one last verse, 1 Corinthians 10:31, "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

Everything is all about Him, so give Him the glory.

Conclusion

Well, I pray you've been challenged and blessed today with God's Word. I started out the sermon talking about coming to those places in life where you ask one of the most important questions anyone can ever ask, "What does it all mean? What's the point and purpose? What is it all about?"

What we've seen today is that everything is all about Jesus. He is the head of everything.

The story of all of our lives is one wherein our heads, we've thought we've known what's best for us. Sooner or later we realize we're not as smart as we thought we were. Just trying to help other, progress the human race, indulge in pleasures or even achieving success falls short of the meaning and purpose in life we long for.

When we look at Jesus the Son of God and see the crown of thorns on His head then we see what it's all about, the grace and forgiveness He offers in His blood.

So we're going to end by reflecting on that today. Each week here at The Resolved we respond to God by going to one of the tables throughout the room where we take a piece of bread as Jesus perfect life and dip it in the wine or the juice as His blood. It's a way of us saying, "Jesus you are first, it's all about you, thank you for what you've done for me, you're a good head, I trust you with my life."

I'd encourage you today as you respond to ask God what your next step is.

Maybe it's committing to Jesus' church in a way you haven't yet, either giving or serving or getting more regular or becoming a member? Maybe it's becoming a Christian, getting baptized, and getting involved in the church community? Maybe it's giving something up in your life where Jesus has not been first or maybe it's pursuing Him this week in a way you haven't or haven't in a long time. Whatever God is inviting you into today you can trust Him because He is a good head.