



Colossians 1:17

17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Reflection

A friend of mine is thinking about climbing mount Everest. Fewer than five thousand people have reached its summit which in part is to do with the danger (so far 1 in 20 who've attempted it have died) but also to do with the cost. My friend is very fit, a seasoned climber, all in all a very accom-

plished man, but he has yet to find a way to broach with his wife the delicate matter of the \$200,000 or so it will cost for him to attempt the climb!

But putting all that aside, and imagining a safe, injury free ascent, perfect weather, and fitness levels well up to the task, you can imagine the unfolding visiting and sense of awe as you approach the summit.

Colossians 1:15–20 keeps taking us higher and higher as well, and just when you think you've reached the summit, some new thought, statement and reality about Jesus Christ opens up an even more breathtaking vista than the one before it. If you thought Friday's passage topped them all then just wait for today's. But first, let's

read the whole section again, because you can't get enough of it. Colossians 1:15–20,

15 The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. 19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to

himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Jesus is the image of the invisible God, bearing the exact imprint of his nature. He has been appointed 'firstborn' over all creation. Following ancient usage, this means that the highest honour belongs to him; Jesus is completely supreme in all creation. That's just verse 15. On Friday verse 16 explained why Jesus is completely supreme over all creation – because in him all things were created; all things have been created through him and for him. In him. Through him. And for him. Everything. But just when you thought we couldn't go higher, we arrive at today's verse, Colossians 1:17.

17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Not only were all things created in Jesus and through Jesus and to Jesus; he is before all things and in him all things hold together! Not only is Jesus pre-existent to all creation, i.e. eternal, all of creation is held together 'in him.' You might have heard Jesus described as 'Creator and Sustainer – this is the sustainer part. Hebrews 1 says something similar,

3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.

No only were all things created in Jesus

and by Jesus and for Jesus, but right now, Jesus is holding all things into being. If he were to stop doing so even for a moment then all of creation would fall out of being and cease to exist. Right now even as you listen to me speak these words Jesus Christ is holding every square inch of the universe into being (Col 1), sustaining all things by his powerful word (Heb 1). What holds the universe together is not an idea or a virtue, or dark matter, or any other scientific hypothesis, but a person: the resurrected Christ. Without him electrons would not continue to circle nuclei, gravity would cease to work, the planets would not stay in their orbits – but more than this they would all fall out of being. All of it – everything we see, touch, taste or hear – is the gracious temporary provision of Jesus Christ who is sustaining all,

holding all things into being so that we might have time to turn and repent. His incredible power is on display temporarily sustaining our universe just so that we might turn and recognise him as our Lord and Saviour and come to him in repentance and faith before he refreshes and recreates it all in the new heavens and new earth where we'll dwell with him forever.

Are you enjoying this new vista? This new height in our understanding and appreciation of the risen Lord Jesus? Colossians 1:17,

17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

A medieval painter tries to capture this

verse. His painting shows Jesus in the clouds, and below him the world of humans and nature. From Christ to every object is painted a thin gold thread. The artist is saying that Christ is responsible for sustaining the existence of every created thing.

Or there's this poem by Joseph Mary Plunkett, that tries to capture the same,

I see His blood upon the rose
And in the stars the glory of His eyes,
His body gleams amid eternal snows,
His tears fall from the skies,

I see His face in every flower,
The thunder and the singing of the
birds
Are but His voice – and carven by His

power

Rocks are His written words.

All pathways by His feet are worn,

His strong heart stirs the ever-beating sea,

His crown of thorns is twined with every thorn,

His cross every tree.

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Think

Enlarge your vision of Jesus Christ today as you think deeply through the fact that right now Jesus Christ is sustaining the

universe through his powerful word. Right now Jesus Christ is actively holding everything that exists into being. Right now he is graciously regulating the beating of the hearts of more than seven billion people, the greater part of whom do not even acknowledge his existence, let alone his lordship over their lives.

How do we respond to this vision of Christ? Now that our eyes see him clearly how must we live? Respond like the poet, seeing Christ in his every good gift, in the work of his hands, in the faces of those created in his image, in the wonder of the universe, in the pages of Scripture – see Christ and his handiwork everywhere. And worship. Make every moment of your life an act of worship, doing everything and living every moment to the glory of Jesus

Christ. And enjoy him forever. I think that is the response that Colossians 1:15–20 is calling us to.

Pray

Pray today that this would be your response to Jesus. Right at the heart of almost every problem we encounter in life is the fact that our Jesus is too small. Pray again today that God might raise our vision to the one who is before all things and in whom all things hold together.