

**Colossians 1:15-23**

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers - all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross. And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his fleshy body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him - provided that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven. I, Paul, became a servant of this gospel.

## Sermon

I am first! I am in control of my life. If I want it, I have to go get it. I am a self made man, earning every thing I have ever made. No one is going to do it for me. My hard work, my gifts and talents. I have to make it on my own, I have to prove that I am the best.

I am first! I am the best singer, the best football player, the best actor. My talents take me to the top. My purpose is to prove that I am the best and to earn the most money and be loved by everyone.

I am first! No one else cares for me, I was abandoned by my father, picked on by the other kids. I chose a gang that accepted me in. I chose drugs to help me feel like I was more than first in a party of one!

But then the day came where the high was no longer high and the next hit barely took the edge off. The gang turned on me when I didn't live up to what they wanted me to be. And something had to change.

The day came where the industry said, "You are no longer first. You are too old, too slow, your music isn't hip, your body no longer fits the image." No amount of surgeries could keep me on top. No amount of practice could make me as good as the younger players coming in. Something had to change.

The day came where I made a mistake, one little mistake, but it cost me my job. That job was everything. To get where I was, I had to be ruthless and I didn't make a lot of friends. And now the job is gone, and I am alone. Something had to change.

Friends, we live in a culture that wants us to be first, to be the best, to care only for ourselves. We are told from an early age that if we work hard and practice hard, that we can do anything. And I will be the first to tell you that having a good work ethic is essential to living out a good life. But the difficult question that often goes overlooked is our purpose in life. Why do we want to work hard? Why do we want to do our best? What hope do we have in trying to rise to the top and stay there when we are guaranteed to fail, to fall, to be replaced?

But the writer of Colossians reminds us that there is a different way. "Christ is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation". Look at the text again in your bulletins. I want you to recognize the number of times and ways the author points to Christ as being the first. Firstborn of creation, head of the body, the beginning, firstborn of the dead, first place in everything. In firstborn of creation we recognize that Christ is Alpha, the beginning of all things. In firstborn of the dead we recognize that Christ is Omega, the end of all things even as a new beginning starts.

What does it mean to put Christ first? What does it mean to say that I am Second? Let's begin with what it doesn't mean. Being second doesn't mean that you don't matter, that what you do is unimportant or that in some way you are losing. Sometimes you hear a college student say something like "C's get degrees, don't sweat it." But being second is not about coasting, or doing the minimum. Being second recognizes the truth about who is in charge and gives purpose for our lives.

Being second means that we take seriously what God has done in the world and in our lives. Who among us have felt the comfort of Christ in the comfort of a friend or family member? Who among us have been told by a stranger something that encouraged us like they appreciate what we do or thanking us for holding a door or recognizing our hard work? How many of us have friends who help us laugh and help us when we cry? How many of us have considered the mercy of the cross and felt the overwhelming gratitude knowing that Christ's love overcomes sin and death? Christ's love teaches us to love, Christ's forgiveness allows us to forgive, Christ's service teaches us to serve one another. In life, we live to the Lord, in death, we die to the Lord. I am not my own, but I am Second

I am a child of God, I put my faith in Christ and I do my best to glorify him. And when I fail, I rely on Christ to pick me up. For Christ died so that I might live, so that I might, even in my imperfection, be presented as holy and blameless and irreproachable before him. Christ is first so that I might be second. Thanks be to God for giving us a purpose and a hope in Christ.