

Christ is Lord

Colossians 3:22-25 (NKJV)

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Good Morning - My Name is Dave Thiele and I'm filling in for Pastor Jake this morning. You know Thanksgiving is almost upon us. It's the time of year when turkeys stop gobblin' and we start gobblin' turkeys. This Thursday I get to see the Detroit Lions play football on Thanksgiving Day, and **some of you** get to see the Dallas Cowboys play. I'm really more of a Broncos fan, but I still have a connection with Detroit.



You see, I'm originally from Detroit. I lived there back in the 1950's – Yes, I really am that old. Back then it was known as the murder capitol of the WORLD! But most of that had to do with the mobs and crime bosses so to the ordinary citizens it wasn't that much of a threat. In fact my mom used to send us to the store to pick things up for her when we were quite young. When my sister was about 10 years old and my brother was about 7, my mom decided to send them to the store to pick up a loaf of bread. My brother wanted to show how responsible he was so he asked to be allowed to carry the bread home. My mom told him it would be Ok, but he had to make sure he didn't squeeze the bread or drop the bread. My sister handled the money and made sure she got the right change. My brother took the loaf and they started back home which was about a four block walk. He held the bread tightly to his chest to make certain he didn't drop it. My sister admonished him for squeezing the bread. He looked at turned it over and held it close to his chest again. This happened several times until they finally arrived back at home. My brother walked through the door – handed my mother this loaf of bread that looked like an hour glass and the first thing he said was "I no squeezez the bread mama!"



I got permission from my brother to tell you this story because I wanted to point out that my responsibility as a teacher of God's Word is like a waiter or a delivery person. God prepares the food and all I have to do is get it to you without messing it up or dropping it all over. So hopefully when I am done today I can say to God "I no squeezez the bread daddy!" and really mean it.

Let's pray - - - - -

Now, we'll be putting several passages of scripture up on the overhead throughout the message and for the sake of time I'll try not to ask you to turn there, but you might want to take some notes and check them out on your own. You need to be like the Noble Bereans and check the scriptures to see if these things are so. You can turn to Colossians Chapter 3 verse 22 to chapter 4 verse 1, and keep your finger there - that will be our main focus. That's Colossians 3 verse 22 to Colossians 4:1. You hold your place there and we are going to start with: John 1:1

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John 1:1 (NKJV) tells us:

¹ In the beginning was **the Word**, and **the Word was with God**, and **the Word was God**.

Continuing in John chapter one and look with me at verse 14

John 1:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ And **the Word became flesh and dwelt among us**, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

John tells us right at the beginning of his gospel that **Jesus is God in flesh**.

Let's jump to: John 10:30

and see what Jesus had to say

John 10:30 (NKJV)

³⁰ **I and My Father are one.**"

Jesus claimed equality with God. Certainly that was a bold claim and it took some time for people to get it. Look at what Jesus asked Philip in John 14:9

John 14:9 (NKJV)

⁹ Jesus said to him, "**Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?**"

Jesus is God in flesh. Let's shift gears slightly – Observe what is recorded in Matthew 16 verses 15 and 16.

Matthew 16:15-16 (NKJV)

Here we see Peter's confession.

¹⁵ He said to them, "**But who do you say that I am?**"

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Jesus is the **Christ** – the anointed one of God – the Messiah.

I submit to you this background so you will know that when the Bible describes many of the attributes of God, they are reflected to us in the person of Jesus Christ.

We are currently in a series called **Christ is** and Pastor Jake has been explaining from the book of Colossians just who Christ is. Today we will see that **Christ is Lord**.

Now, let's dig in to our passage for today.

Paul was writing to the Colossians – who were the Colossians? The Colossians Paul wrote to were the believers that lived in the city of Colossae.

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It was located in Asia Minor, which we know as the country of Turkey today. The believers there formed a local church that became known by its geographic location; the church at Colossae or the Colossian Church. Epaphras, a native of Colossae who apparently was a convert of the apostle Paul, was most likely the founder and leader of the church.



Paul writing to the believers in Colossae addresses those members of the church that were slaves beginning in verse 22 of chapter 3 of Colossians:

- ²² Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God.
²³ And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the **Lord** and not to men,
²⁴ knowing that from the **Lord** you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.
²⁵ But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.

On in to chapter 4 and verse 1, where Paul addresses slave owners.

- ¹ Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a **Master** in heaven.

Let's take a look at Colossians chapter 3 verse 22.

- ²² Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God.

Bondservants – The Greek word is doo-los which means slave. It was an individual owned by another person – they were considered property. Not a very pretty picture.

What was it like to be a slave in the Roman Empire? Listen to this short description from Rome Exposed – Roman Life by Mirza and Tsang. Quote

“The master's power over the slave was called (dominica potestas), and it was absolute. Torture, degradation, unwarranted punishment, and even killing a slave when he was old or sick, - in the eyes of the law, slaves were property who could not legally hold (or own) property, make contracts, or marry, and could testify in court only under torture. The death of his master did not free a slave.” Unquote

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What does Paul tell these slaves in Colossians 3:22? “Obey in all things your masters according to the flesh” Paul tells them to be obedient – in some things? No – in ALL things. He then goes on to say, “not with eye service as men-pleasers” – in other words don’t just work hard only when you know you are being watched. He instructs them to do it with “sincerity of heart.” How could they possibly do that? **Fearing God** – in awe and reverence for God - out of respect for their real **Lord** and Master.

Often our first thought is this doesn’t apply to me – we don’t have slavery in this country anymore. We fought a horrific civil War about 150 years ago that ended slavery here.



But slavery was part of the economic system which made our nation so profitable – today we have hired workers instead of slaves. The logical application is the employer – employee relationship. We could view this as instructions to employees to serve their employers not with eye-service as men pleasers, but with sincerity of heart. That may hit a little closer to home for some of us. Paul goes on to say in verse 23 of Colossians 3:

²³ And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the **Lord** and not to men,

Wait a minute does that include 20 minutes before quitting time on Friday? Ouch – I’m preaching to myself too. How are we to serve our employers? Heartily – The Greek word is psouo-khay’ – which has to do with the vital force which animates the body – the breath of life from God. Today we might say with gusto, enthusiasm, zest.

Who are we to do this for? “As to the **Lord** and not men.” When we work and serve our employers heartily – or with gusto, we are really serving the **Lord**.

Who is the **Lord**? *Jesus Christ* –

If you’ve ever seen a **Charlie Brown Christmas** (Now available on Blu-Ray disc) one of the most thought provoking moments comes when Linus is explaining the true meaning of Christmas and he quotes from the Gospel of Luke. Remember **Luke 2:11 (NKJV)**



¹¹ For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the **Lord**.

This Christmas I hope you see more than just a baby in a manger.

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This was part of that angelic announcement made to the shepherds abiding in the fields. Let's fast-forward about 33 years.

Jesus appears to the disciples after His resurrection and right after they had just spent all night on an unprofitable fishing expedition. Look at John 21:5-7

John 21:5-7 (NKJV)

⁵ Then Jesus said to them, "**Children, have you any food?**" They answered Him, "No."

⁶ And He said to them, "**Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find *some*.**" So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish.

⁷ Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the **Lord!**" Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the **Lord**, he put on *his* outer garment (for he had removed it), and plunged into the sea.

He couldn't wait for the boat to dock to be with his **Lord**.

Two disciples on the road to Emmaus encounter Jesus after His crucifixion and resurrection. What they reported is recorded in Luke 24:33-34

Luke 24:33-34 (NKJV)

³³ So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those *who were* with them gathered together,

³⁴ saying, "The **Lord** is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!"

When they met with the risen Lord Jesus they had to share it with others.

Saul an enemy of the church encountered the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus. We find it in Acts 9. Look at verses 3 to 5 of Acts 9.

Acts 9:3-5 (NKJV)

³ As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven.

⁴ Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "**Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?**"

⁵ And he said, "**Who are You, Lord?**" Then the **Lord** said, "**I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.**"



The Lord Jesus identified himself with His church. Saul was converted and would go on to become known as Paul - one of the greatest servants of Christ that ever lived. Paul would write the letter to the Colossians we are looking at today. Let's go on to verse 24 of Colossians chapter 3.

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²⁴ knowing that from the **Lord** you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the **Lord** Christ.

When these slaves worked diligently for their masters, they could be sure they would be rewarded by their true Lord and Master Jesus Christ. They might not have any rights in this world, but they would be considered sons that receive the inheritance by the King Himself, in the world to come. So we too should work at our jobs with honesty and integrity.

On to verse 25 of Colossians chapter 3.

²⁵ But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.

Because of the way the chapter break is here you might view this as a continuing thought about the slaves serving their masters. If that is the case then it would seem to be saying if you are a disobedient slave, then you can expect to be punished. That would certainly be true in most cases. However, this could be a transitional verse because in Colossians 4:1 we see Paul addressing a new group of people – the slave owners. If that is the case we could look at it this way:

Some earthly masters might respond to seeing their slaves serve them wholeheartedly and realize what great assets they were to them and in turn treat them kindly. We see that in the Old Testament account of Joseph who was sold into slavery and was serving Potiphar. Look at Genesis 39 verses 4 and 5 - speaking of Potiphar it says:

Genesis 39:4-5 (NKJV)

⁴ So Joseph found favor in his sight, and served him. Then he made him overseer of his house, and all *that* he had he put under his authority.

⁵ So it was, from the time *that* he had made him overseer of his house and all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had in the house and in the field.

Joseph worked hard for Potiphar and Potiphar in turn gave him more responsibility and treated him better. But not every slave-owner would react that way. Some would continue to be cruel taskmasters. They might hold positions of prominence in this world, but it would not mean a thing when it came time to face their **Lord** and Master. They would receive just recompense for the wrongs they committed. Nefarious slave-owners that refuse to place their faith and trust in Jesus Christ will be punished for their sins. God is no respecter of persons. Peter makes this clear in Acts 10:34. Peter was struggling with the idea that God loves both Jews and Gentiles.

Acts 10:34 (NKJV)

³⁴ Then Peter opened *his* mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality.

We also see this illustrated by the Old Testament law.

Exodus 23:3 (NKJV) says:

³ You shall not show partiality to a poor man in his dispute.

Leviticus 19:15 (NKJV) stated:

¹⁵ You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor.

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Why was this included in the law? Because we are God's children and we are supposed to be like Him. We are to emulate Him. We are to be impartial – that is why the statue depicting justice wears a blindfold.



Deuteronomy 10:17 (NKJV) tells us:

¹⁷ For the Lord your God *is* God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe.

This leads right in to verse 1 of Colossians Chapter 4.

Colossians 4:1 (NKJV)

¹ Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.

We have a saying, "What goes around – comes around". Treat people poorly and you will one day find yourself treated poorly. Treat people kindly and you will one day find yourself being treated kindly.

In **Mark 11:25-26 (NKJV)** Jesus is speaking and said:

²⁵ "And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.

²⁶ But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."

That makes us a bit uncomfortable. We are to be compassionate and merciful if we want God to be compassionate and merciful to us. The principle expressed in Colossians 3:22 to 4:1 goes beyond slaves and slave-owners. It goes beyond employer and employees. It can apply in all types of leadership – follower relationships. Teachers and students, Officers and enlisted men, Non-Coms and lower ranking personnel, Husbands and wives, Parents and children, and the list goes on. If you are under the authority of someone then serve them as though you were serving the Lord. If you are in a position of authority, then treat those people the way you would want the Lord to treat you.

It is similar to what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount found in **Matthew 7:2 (NKJV)**

² For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.

You could also liken it to the golden rule Jesus taught us in **Luke 6:31 (NKJV)**

³¹ And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.

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It was revolutionary ideas and principles like that – that finally won out over slavery in our nation. You cannot enslave men and say that's how you want to be treated. That's one of the reasons Christianity initially was considered such a threat to the Roman Empire.

....

Often our approach to the study of scripture is, "what do I get out of this". I'm not saying that's wrong. A valid way to approach any passage of scripture is: What does it say – what does it mean by what it says and then how does it apply in my life. But what I don't want you to miss is the bigger picture here.

At one time Paul and his companions went to the city of Thessalonika. They taught the scriptures in that city. They upset a group of people there and what was the charge against them? We see it in **Acts 17:6b (NKJV)**

"These who have turned the world upside down"

Paul writes this letter to the believers in Colossae – Paul had never been to Colossae. He knew of the believers there because of Epaphrus. What were the circumstances of his writing? Paul was in prison. The specter of death is with him every day. He doesn't know if he will ever make it to Colossae – and in fact it would appear that he never does. He is not writing to these people with trite sayings like, "I hope you are well, my circumstances are difficult but I'm keeping a stiff upper lip – and all that sort of rot." He has to deal with doctrinal error he has been made aware of, and he wants to convey to them the highlights of what he taught others. He wants them to know the things that will turn **the world upside down**. Paul wants to make certain the Colossians understand who and what Christ is. We've already seen some of that in this series.

Christ is life-changing, Christ is Supreme, Christ is Reconciliation, Christ is Perseverance, Christ is freedom, Christ is our righteousness, Christ is our bond, and Christ is Lord. The passage we've looked at today is part of that teaching.

Because Christ is Lord, he has the right to make certain demands on our lives. This is counter to our American culture of rugged individualism. We hear Frank Sinatra – Old blue eyes - sing "I did it my way" and we say **yes!** That's how it should be. But, you don't find that in scripture. As believers we come together as the body of Christ. We work in harmony and unity. He sets us free from sin and death and hell – we are now free to serve Him.

One of the great paradoxes of Christianity is that we are free to be slaves of Christ.

John Stott once said, "Under Communism, man exploits his fellow man, whereas under Democracy the reverse is true." In Colossians 4:1 we are given a glimpse of man exploiting his fellow man under Roman rule. It is estimated that at the time this was written, 20 percent of the population was enslaved. That's one in five people.

Paul knows slaves will need to live out their faith in order to win their earthly masters for Christ.

Paul knows that masters will need to live out their faith in order to win their slaves for Christ.

Paul knows slaves and masters alike will need to work together to reach their community for Christ.

Jew, gentile, male, female, slave or free – There is no difference in Christ!

All Christians need to work together in harmony to win souls for Christ.

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Only by working together – no matter what our background or station in life –

Only by being obedient to our Lord -

Only by allowing His Holy Spirit to work in us and through us –

Only then will we accomplish great things for Christ –

Only then will we turn our world upside down!

If you can grasp that truth - **it will turn your world upside down!**



Let's pray -----