

## Focus on Colossians 1:11–20

*Semicontinuous Jer.*  
23:1–6  
*Luke 1:68–79*  
*Complementary*  
*Jer. 23:1–6*  
*Ps. 46 Col.*  
**1:11–20**  
*Luke 23:33–43*

### WHAT is important to know?

—From “*Exegetical Perspective*” by Abraham Smith

To God, thanks is offered for the initial incorporation of believers into the dominion of Christ, through which the believers were granted a new status as saints and the inheritance or benefits that accrue to that new status (vv. 12–14). In a powerful creed or hymn (vv. 15–20),

Christ’s singular role is emphasized, not only as the agent or representative according to which *all* of creation (vv. 15–18a) came into being, but also as the conduit by which *all* of creation is reconciled to God (vv. 18b–20).

### WHERE is God in these words?

—From “*Theological Perspective*” by Barbara J. Blodgett Christ’s reign is established in a paradoxical way: through crucifixion. The text refers first implicitly (v. 14) and then explicitly (v. 20) to a reign whose freedom and peace are achieved through the saving power of death on a cross. He does not rule by threat or military domination or acquisition. His authority is not sustained by asking homage from others. He does not subject people to himself. His “kingdom,” therefore, stands in stark contrast to other imperial rules. His is an entirely different sort of empire than, say, that of Rome.

### SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

—From “*Pastoral Perspective*” by Neta Pringle The answer lies in Jesus the Christ: “All things have been created through him and for him” (v. 16). It is in Jesus that the means and the meaning of creation are found. In Jesus, the redemption of creation is possible—a redemption not just for human beings but for all creation. How does this help us as we struggle to make sense of the complexities of human social constructs—politics, philosophies, family? What does Paul say to the “green” concerns of ecology, diet, and fuel consumption? If we do proclaim Jesus is the way in which God “rescued us from the power of darkness” (v. 13), does he not offer a way out of our human dilemmas?

### NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

—From “*Homiletical Perspective*” by  
Elizabeth Barrington Forney

Lest we get lost in bickering about priorities either personal or communal, Paul offers us this clarifying wisdom: Christ “is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything” (v. 18). How many church arguments, mission statements, or personal dilemmas might be resolved by simply asking the question, “Does this allow Christ to have first place?” There is a fabulous invitation here to take stock of our personal lives and our common life to see what else might have edged into first place, and to ask that God reorder our lives to suit God’s holy purpose.

## The Christ Hymn

The writer employs a preexisting hymn or poem (vv. 15–20) to declare God’s revelation through Christ and assert the reign of Christ throughout the entire world.

The hymn is a statement of what today we call “high Christology,” a view of Christ that emphasizes his divinity. The hymn’s Christology unfolds in three parts, describing him as one who participates in creation, holds all things together, and reconciles all things in heaven and on earth through his death on the cross. The hymn’s inclusion in this letter serves to underscore the sufficiency of Christ over and against all other cosmic powers, for in the second chapter the writer goes on to warn the community against rival teachings that were apparently encouraging religious practices and pieties that competed with the gospel.

This text is thus fittingly assigned in the lectionary to the Sunday of the Christian year known as the Reign of Christ (or Christ the King). On this Sunday, worshipers are reminded that, as Christians, they are subjects of Christ and Christ alone. Christ’s power transcends all other powers. Moreover, salvation in Christ has been achieved for all.

This is the last Sunday of the church year and as such represents a transition point in the calendar. It is like a new year’s eve, a time to be revealed.