

Good morning. What a wonderful reminder that we'll get past this really cold stuff. How tall do you think Jesus was? Last week Tim talked about doors that we measure to grow the children. We have one of those in our house.

It's a little broom closet off our kitchen and we have all the kids there. It's interesting to look at. I wonder if Mary had one of those for Jesus. Did she have Joseph use his carpentry skills to craft a way to measure Jesus? And I wonder how tall Jesus was at twelve years old.

You remember that story where he stressed out his parents because he stayed behind in the temple? In that story, at the end of Luke two, it says that Jesus grew. He grew in wisdom, he grew in favor with God and all the people. But it also says he grew in stature, which means he got taller. And I wonder what the top mark was on that door.

And I wonder when Mary stopped measuring him. We just don't know. But we do know Jesus enters into ministry around age 30. I just wonder how tall he was. I looked around a little bit.

It didn't take long to find this, but archaeological evidence and historical writings says that the typical male Middle eastern male in the first century was about five 5ft tall, five inches short. Now people have made fun of me all my life. About my size. I don't know why.

It's like they still do. It's like, what do you want me to do about it? I think I'm done. I'm growing out, but I'm not growing up. And so I should have picked taller parents, I guess, but I didn't do well.

But I take some consolation. I was probably just a little bit taller than Jesus. I don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing, but it's possible. Here's a related question. Do you think Jesus was good looking?

Do you think he was handsome? A lot of people believe just the opposite. If you google was Jesus ugly, hear me out. You'll get a whole bunch of interesting, respectful, even reverent articles that say yes. And it's based on scripture.

It's based on a couple of passages out of Isaiah 52 and 53, which are suffering servant passages that we believe were ultimately fulfilled in Jesus. For example, Isaiah 53, verse two, says there was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him. Isaiah 50 214 talks about his face being marred and disfigured, deformed. And of course, we believe that's probably a reference to the cross and how Jesus was beaten and bludgeoned almost beyond the point of recognition. It's interesting to me to think about what Jesus looked like, how tall he was, just his facial features, whatever.

It's interesting to think about those things. But our thoughts about Jesus go a lot deeper than that. What do we think about him as his capabilities and the things he can do if we're

not careful, we'll make Jesus into the image we want him to be. We'll make him. We'll project upon him the things that we want, and he becomes what we want him to be.

Voltaire, the 18th century french philosopher and a critic of Christianity, says, God created man in his own image, and man has been returning the favor ever since. Anne Lamott, a modern writer, says, you know, you've created God in your own image. When it turns out that he hates all the same people, you know, a wrong view of God is directly tied to a wrong view of Jesus. We can guess how tall Jesus was. We can imagine what he looked like.

But we do not have to guess about who he was and what he could do. He tells us, he shows us, he teaches us, and in the process he reveals who God is, the right view of everything. One day, Jesus was preparing his closest followers for his departure. He says, you believe in God, believe also in me. Don't let your hearts be troubled.

And he's starting to talk about going back to his father's house and how there's all kinds of rooms that he's going to prepare a place and come back. Well, Thomas and Philip are there. Thomas has some doubts and I think Philip's a bit skeptical. And so they start asking questions. And finally Philip says, just show us the father.

And I think Jesus goes, really, Philip? You've been with me so long. And then Jesus says this. Anyone who has seen me has seen the father. So Jesus shows us who God is.

The Colossians. And we're studying Colossians right now. The Colossians were not seeing Jesus correctly, and thus they were failing to really understand God. And there's a result of that. The result is that they weren't not living well.

Some were immoral. The church was divided over strong views about philosophy and probably politics of the day. Some were insecure in their faith. They weren't sure about their relationship with God. I'm sure some were full of guilt because they just couldn't live up to what God was asking them to do.

And it was just really a bit of a mess. I was excited about this colossian series because several years ago, 2008 to be exact, I got to go to Colosse. I received a lily grant to go study the seven churches of Asia Minor, the ones Jesus dictates letters to in revelation two and three. Colosse is not one of them, but it's close to some of them. And so one day my private guide, which Lily gave me, Selchuk.

We were driving down the road and we saw a sign that said colosse. And I said something about it, and he said, do you want to go? I said, yeah, I want to go. And he said, I've never been there either. It's not a tourist destination.

There's been no archaeological digs. It's just kind of a very interesting place. It's very untouched. And so we go there and there's a bunch of temple ruins and columns and

things probably from an earthquake in 60 ad just still laying there. There were some gypsy shacks that had kind of been built into some of those ruins.

And it was really one of my favorite places to visit because it was just so untouched. It was so real. Everything was there. And I just imagined the church that was there. And I thought about Philemon and Onesimus and all these people that are mentioned in Colossae, and Philemon, of course, lived in Colossae.

So it was just all these people kind of came to my mind. And Selchuk and I walked around for a little while, and as we were getting ready to get back in our car, an old man walked up. We went ahead and got in the car. This old man was dressed in really kind of shabby, tattered clothes. And he had a shovel over his shoulder.

And I just remember the handle was kind of crooked. It was obviously just handcrafted. And he started talking to my guide in Turkish, of course, I couldn't really understand anything they were saying, but I quickly picked up where the conversation was going. The old man discerned or learned that I was a Christian. And the old man, like almost 100% of the people living in Turkey, was Muslim.

So the old man started going, Muhammad, Muhammad and Isa. Isa. He was lecturing me about Muhammad and Jesus. The muslim view is that Jesus did not die on the cross. And so this guy was trying to correct me about my false view of Jesus.

And at one point he kind of threw his shovel down and he's no, no Muhammad. And he was getting really agitated, and I was getting a little uncomfortable, and he bent down to pick his shovel back up. Selchuk. And I did not know what was going to happen next. So we said in English, see ya.

And got out of there. But I was thinking about that story over the last couple of weeks as I was thinking about Colosse and this is pretty interesting to me. The letter was written because of mistaken views about Jesus. And one of the mistaken views, interestingly enough, was an early form, don't get hung up on these terms, was docetism, which is related to gnosticism, which says that Jesus was not really fully human, he just appeared that way and that he did not really die on the cross. It just appeared that way.

So you can see the connection between what this muslim man believes and what was being thought and believed in the first century. There are a lot of mistaken views about Jesus in Colosse from the left and from the right. There was a little bit, everything going on sourced in greek philosophy, greek mysticism, all the way to jewish legalism, to pagan asceticism. Yeah, lots and lots of isms. But isms, you see, they thrive.

They thrive because of misunderstanding about Jesus. And Paul's going to talk about some of these isms a little bit later. But he wants to do something first. He doesn't go there first. He doesn't start with the problems.

And that's significant, very significant for you and me. He starts with a high and a holy view of Jesus. That's where you got to start and that's where he starts. So I'm going to ask you to listen carefully. Listen carefully with me about what Paul says about Jesus.

Some think this is expressed poetically. Maybe it is. It doesn't really matter because Paul wants them and he wants us to grasp this first and foremost. And so again, I really want you to listen with me, especially if you're not fully at peace with God this morning.

Maybe you came in here with lots of stuff on your mind. Maybe you think the kingdom of God just has to have the right political power accompanying it to do its will. And the political power that you desire is not present and you're stressed about it, but maybe a little bit deeper. You came in this morning, maybe some of us came in with guilt over repeated failures of trying to follow God and just can't quite get it. Or maybe you came in wondering if you have any value or any worth.

Do I make any difference in the world? Do I have any value whatsoever? Maybe you're concerned about your image and what people would think if they really knew what you were really like. Maybe you're burdened with grief this morning, or maybe you just have some doubts about all of it. Whatever it is, listen carefully to colossians.

1:15 through 2:3. This is a new, living translation. Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation. For through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth.

He made the things we can see and the things we can't see, such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him, and for him he existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together. Christ is also the head of the church, which is his body. He is the beginning, supreme over all who rise from the dead. So he is first in everything.

For God in all his fullness, was pleased to live in Christ. And through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross. You see, he really did die. This includes you, who were once far away from God.

You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions. Yet now he has reconciled you to himself through the death of Christ in his physical body. He really did die. As a result, he has brought you into his own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault. But you must continue to believe this truth and stand firmly in it.

Don't drift away from the assurance you received when you heard the good news. The good news has been preached all over the world, and I, Paul, have been appointed as God's

servant to proclaim it. Last Tuesday morning, if you remember, it was really cold and we had our staff meeting, and it's usually just loud and laughter everywhere, but it was just so quiet. Everybody was just quiet. And so I thought I'd do a little sermon prep and read this passage and ask for thoughts.

And what struck you? So I read the passage and said, what strikes you about it? Or whatever?

Nothing. It's like, okay, that was embarrassing. That was awkward. But later some people came to me, a few came and said, you know what? It was just kind of overwhelming.

There's just so much there, so many things to think about. And then one person said, you know, it's kind of superficial, but what strikes me is just how many hats Jesus wore. And it's pretty profound when you look at the passage and you look at the verses that come from before, because you find that Jesus is creator, he's sustainer, he's redeemer, he is rescuer, he is qualifier. And so what is the right view of Jesus that allows us to really enjoy peace and joy and confidence in this world? What is it about him that allows us to live guilt free and to be at peace and to recognize that we are valuable and we are worth something.

What is it about Jesus that just allows us to be real and to be comfortable about who we are? And I just think that's what we all. I just want to be at peace. I want to be real. I just want joy.

I want to be confident about it all. I think we start with a high and holy view of Jesus, just how mighty and majestic he is. He is the creator of everything. And honestly, I didn't really grow up with that emphasis that Jesus was creator. But scripture makes it pretty plain, really.

In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him, all things were made. Without him, nothing was made that has been made. Who is this word?

Well, down in verse 14, it says, the word became flesh. Again. These people who think Jesus wasn't real, the word became flesh, and he made his dwelling among us. And we've seen his glory, the glory of the one and only son who came from the father, full of grace and truth. So this almighty creator, Jesus, takes on flesh.

Again, a response to this gnostic idea, and he dwells among us. In the Greek, it literally says, he tabernacles with us. And that's a reference to the Old Testament tabernacle, where Jesus, or where God would come and make his presence known and meet people. And so John is saying that creator Jesus pitched his tent with us. Eugene Peterson says, he moved into our neighborhood.

He became like us. He became one of us. And so we say, why did he do that? Well, there's another interesting passage that helps bring all this together, and it's Hebrews one. It says, the sun is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.

After he provided purification for sins, there's the key there. He sat down at the right hand of the majesty in Heaven. So the creator Jesus, becomes our savior. He takes our sins away. He redeems us, he rescues us.

We were separated from our holy God, but Jesus was willing to take our sins to the cross. Two, Corinthians 5:21 says, God made him who had no sin to be sin or a sin offering, so that through him we might become the righteousness of God. And so when we put our faith in Jesus, when we believe that this creator is our savior, we turn to him, and we want to live for him because of what he's done for us. And ultimately, I believe we reenact that whole story, the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. We reenact that in the waters of baptism according to Romans chapter six.

And when we do all that, we enter into God's presence. The creator of all things. And this creator of all things, then makes us new. He makes us a new creation. Paul says that in two Corinthians five.

Also verse 17. If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away, and behold, the new has come. So as we become, this is really important as we become new creations in Christ, believe it or not, we become holy and blameless in the sight of God. We can stand in his presence without fear because he chooses not to see our flaws, our faults.

He does not see the sins that he has forgiven. When he looks at us, when he looks at you, he sees his son, Jesus, because we are clothed with Christ. For you are all children of God through faith in Christ. Jesus and all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes. So none of us is perfect, not even close.

But we are perfect in God's eyes if we're clothed with Christ. And the beautiful thing is we're given the spirit of God to empower us to kind of live up to who we are. And so sourced in God's love, we have grace and mercy. We have the power of the spirit who is working to transform us into the image of Jesus. So God looks down and he sees Jesus.

And down here we're working and cooperating the spirit of God to be formed, to become more like we really are in the sight of God, which becomes a blessing for all those around us. The result of all that is peace, joy and confidence about our salvation, confidence about this world. God's in control. Don't stress about the mess. I know it's hard, but really, we don't need to.

Here's the bottom line and what I want us to remember. A high and holy view of Jesus leads to peace and joy for you. A high and holy view of Jesus leads to peace and joy for you. As

Paul wraps up this high and holy view of Jesus, he reminds the Colossians in us that we need to continue to believe, that we need to continue to stand firm. We continue to not drift away from this assurance, this blessed assurance that we received when we first received the good news.

I believe communion is a key to reminding us of who we are and whose we are. It helps us to stand firm. It helps us not to drift away. It helps us to get recentered. I'm so glad that we are part of church that takes communion each week because we need that.

And as we take communion this morning, I'm thinking about all of us who have something that we brought in here today, and we just need to be reminded of who and whose we are. Especially thinking of those who came in this morning with a weak faith. It's kind of like a candle that the flame is flickering. I'm not sure it's going to make it. And there may be some in here this morning whose faith is like that.

When I think of that image, I think of what is in Matthew twelve where it's talking about Jesus says he will not snuff out a flickering flame. He's not going to snuff it out. Instead he says, come to me. Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened. If you have doubts, if you're just overcome with guilt, just come to me and I'll give you rest.

I'm gentle and humble in heart. You'll find rest for your souls. And I will walk with you. I will walk with you through this world. And we will make it now this is a stunning thing to think about.

The creator of all things, seen and unseen is inviting us into his presence where we can stand holy and blameless without a single fault. Wow. So that's the things I want to think about during the communion this morning. So let me pray. Father, we thank you for powerful reminders about who you are and who we are in Christ.

And it's kind of staggering, really, to think about. Give us the faith. We thank you for the assurance that we receive that even though we feel like we have failed over and over again, that you don't see us that way, that you see us as holy and blameless without a single fault. God, may that be the motivator for us to live well as we allow the spirit to make us more into the image of Jesus. Father, help us to respond responsibly to your grace.

We thank you for the opportunity this morning to take this bread and to drink this juice and to be reminded of just this staggering story of your love and redemption for us. We thank you in the name of Jesus. Amen.

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