

Christ Our Hope  
Colossians 1:15-23  
July 28, 2019

A little girl was sitting in the family room one night drawing a picture. She looked quite serious. So, her Dad asked her, “What are you doing?” “I’m drawing a picture of God,” replied the girl. “How can you do that?” asked the Dad. “Nobody knows what God looks like?” Then the girl said, “They will know when I am done with my picture!” I like her confidence. She has her own sense of what God looks like, what God is like.

But, how do we know what God looks like or what God is like? Philip, one of Jesus disciples asked Jesus to show them the Father, and Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.”<sup>1</sup>

The biblical teaching of who Jesus is, is that “He is the image of the invisible God...For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.”<sup>2</sup> In other words, Jesus is the perfect replicate of God. Jesus Christ is all of God we are able to know and need to know, and he is not only the perfect replicate of God; but he is the one who has saved humanity from the power of darkness through his death on the cross.<sup>3</sup> He is the only way to be saved from sin and darkness.

Some theologians, however, claim that Jesus is not the only savior. They say there could be other saviors from other religions. They see Jesus as just one of many teachers who lead their followers to salvation.

Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, a retired professor of English literature, who had taught at Christian colleges such as Shelton College and Nyack Missionary College.

She has a very liberal theological view. She believes that “Jesus is simply an elder brother, companion, and trail blazer, one among many siblings who shows us how to live in oneness with the divine source.” She says Jesus is nothing more than a brilliant teacher who demonstrates to us how to live.

---

<sup>1</sup> John 14:8-9.

<sup>2</sup> Colossians 1:15 and 19.

<sup>3</sup> Colossians 1:13 and 20.

It is true that there have been many great teachers who said, “This is the way you should live.” But Jesus is not one of them. Instead Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”<sup>4</sup>

He is not *a* way, as in one of many; He is *the* way, as in the one and only. There is no other who can save us from the power of sin and darkness. 1 Timothy 2:5 says, “There is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Jesus Christ.” No one, regardless of reputation, achievement, special knowledge, or personal holiness, can save himself let alone save anyone else. Jesus is the only way through which we can have a relationship with God.

Jesus is not only “the image of the invisible God” but he is also the reconciler between God and Humanity. Paul writes, “For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.”<sup>5</sup>

Leo Tolstoy once wrote a story about a rich man and his servant, called “Master and Man.” The rich man wanted to buy land from another man. He asks one of his servants to go to the landowner to purchase his land. It was only a short journey. They were on a sleigh which was pulled by a horse. The master wanted to get there as fast as he could, so that he could purchase the land before anyone else did. Unfortunately, they were caught in the middle of a blizzard. The snow storm was so severe that they could not even see where they were going. They got lost. The next morning, friends searched for them and found the master, frozen to death, face down in the snow. The horse died as well.

When they lifted him, they found the servant, cold but alive. He survived because the master voluntarily placed himself on top of the servant so he could live.<sup>6</sup>

In a way that is what Jesus did for humanity. He sacrificed himself so that humanity could have life, eternal life. His sacrifice was to bridge the gap between humanity and God.

But what does this mean to “bridge the gap between humanity and God?” It means that Jesus’ sacrifice made it possible for us to begin to live the life that God expected us to live. It made it possible for God and humanity to build a loving

---

<sup>4</sup> John14:6.

<sup>5</sup> Colossians 1:19-20

<sup>6</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Master\\_and\\_Man\\_\(short\\_story\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Master_and_Man_(short_story))

relationship again. This life, the one that God expects us to live, is the life that follows Christ.

Sometime ago, a pastor's wife named Mary Hollingsworth wrote a book called "Fireside Stories." In that book, she introduced a man name Rick. Rick, actually is not the man's real name, but the story is a true story. Rick lives in the southern part of the U.S.

Mary's husband served as a pastor in the town where Rick lived in the 1970's. Rick was a big, burly guy. Neither did he attend church regularly nor participated in any of the church activities, but some friends told Rick they needed his help for Vacation Bible School. They needed him to participate in a play.

Rick did not want to do that, but after a lot of encouragement, he reluctantly agreed. Rick was to play Jesus.

This play was written by Mary Hollingsworth. The first time Mary saw Rick in his Jesus costume, she almost laughed in his face because he seemed so out of place. But Rick took his job very seriously; and he was very good.

When the Vacation Bible School finally started, Rick played his part very well. He was playing the part of Jesus cleaning out the temple. He yelled out to the money-changers "Get outta here! You cannot turn my Father's house into a den of thieves. So, just get out, and don't you ever come back!" He said this in a heavy Southern accent.

Then he proceeded to destroy the temple by throwing over the tables of the money-changers and tossing the crooks out into the street. Rick really loved this part. It was more like a TV cop show than a Bible story . . . but the kids all loved it.

Every night for the whole week, Rick was Jesus to the kids. Kids and the parents loved the skits. The kids voted that the skits were the best part of the VBS.

The best part of the story, though, came after the VBS. Acting like Jesus for several weeks had a lasting impact on Rick. He began coming to the church services more regularly. He even started coming to the midweek Bible study and staying for fellowship events.

But the most powerful impact on him came from the children at the church. For weeks and months after VBS, they would point at Rick and whisper, "Look! There's Jesus!"

Before long, people noticed real change in Rick. He and his wife began team teaching Sunday School classes, hosting youth activities, and leading teens on mission trips. He organized a youth softball team at the church and served as coach. After a few years, he was chosen as a deacon to serve in the youth ministry. “In short,” says Mary Hollingsworth, “he stopped ACTING like Jesus and began LIVING like Jesus.”<sup>7</sup>

That’s what it means to bridge the gap between God and humanity. He was a person living a different life as a result of experiencing God’s grace. As Rick played the role of Jesus, he experienced a little bit of Jesus’ heart and mind, and that changed him. Jesus reveals God to us. He reveals his love and grace to us.

Jesus also reveals how a godly person is to live. All of this is part of why Christ came into the world. That is why Jesus is our hope for this life and the next. “He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God . . .” Are you still walking and living in darkness? Come out into the light. Come into Christ's kingdom through the forgiveness of your sin.

Jesus is our hope. Let us begin to live like Jesus.

---

<sup>7</sup> Mary Hollingsworth, *Fireside Stories* (Nashville: Word Publishing 2000), pp. 162-164.