

Our hope and blessings
A Sermon by Rev. Frances Savill
Sunday July 10, 2022

Colossians 1:1-20

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/colossians/>

I hope that overview of Colossians was helpful.
I'd like to pick up on just a couple of things from chapter 1.

*1 Paul, an apostle of King Jesus by God's purpose and Timothy my brother;
2 to God's holy people in Colossae, the king's faithful family; grace to you and peace, from God our father.*

3 We always thank God, the father of our Lord, King Jesus, when we pray for you, 4 because we've heard of your faith in King Jesus and the love you have for all God's holy people, 5 because of the hope which is kept safe for you in the heavenly places. You heard about this before in the word of truth, the gospel 6 which has arrived on your doorstep – just as, in fact, it's producing fruit and growing in all the world, as it has been among you, from the day you heard it and came to know the grace of God in truth. 7 That's how you learnt it from Epaphras our beloved fellow slave. He's a loyal and faithful servant of the king on your behalf. 8 He it was who gave us the news about your love in the spirit. (NTE)

What is the hope you have that is kept safe for you in heaven, or in "the heavenly places"? What comes to mind for most of us first, is our hope in Jesus when we die. Part of our faith is about Jesus' promises that death is not the last word, but one day we will be with him face to face. Death is swallowed up in victory.

But what I hope you heard and what I hope we start to understand is that heaven, the new creation, heavenly places, the kingdom of heaven, and the kingdom of God, are not just our future that begins after death, but here in our midst now!

Jesus announced: "The kingdom of heaven is among you, it has come near to you." Now, in your hearing, now in our reading, the heavenly places are being

established on earth and spreading through Jesus' reign and through the lives of Jesus' followers.

We pray daily that God's kingdom will be established more and more on earth, that more of earth will come under the influence and authority of Jesus the King.

So, our hope that is kept safe is lived today.

In a few sentences Paul will say:

"And I pray that you will learn to give thanks to the father, who has made you fit to share the inheritance of God's holy ones in the light. ¹³ He has delivered us from the power of darkness, and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved son."

As we have accepted Jesus' gift of redemption, forgiveness, and new life, we have been delivered into the kingdom of Jesus, now. Jesus reigns and so as God's people we live into that reign, we live heaven on earth lives now. So, we provide space for recovery groups, and food for the homeless, we support and care for one another, lifting each other up.

But we are also resting and assured that we are God's beloved people, who are in the care of God. So, while we follow Jesus and live by his example, we don't have to be anxious about anything.

We are coworkers in the gospel, but the other half of the equation is our strong and mighty God, the Trinity that is at work in us and in our world. The kingdom has come, Jesus reigns overall, and the victory is already won.

Jesus is the image of God, the invisible one, the firstborn of all creation.

¹⁶ For in him all things were created, in the heavens and here on the earth. Things we can see and things we cannot, – thrones and lordships and rulers and powers –

all things were created both through him and for him.

¹⁷ And he is ahead, prior to all else and in him all things hold together;

¹⁸ and he himself is supreme, the head over the body, the church.

He is the start of it all, firstborn from realms of the dead; so in all things he might be the chief.

19 For in him all the Fullness (of God) was glad to dwell 20 and through him to reconcile all to himself, making peace through the blood of his cross, through him – yes, things on the earth, and also the things in the heavens.

Thanks be to God.

Prayer: King Jesus, we are your beloved people, we are a holy family, heirs, and joint heirs with you. Help us to follow you and live by your example, but help us also to leave all our anxiety with you, for you reign overall. You are first, the firstborn of all creation, and in you all the fullness of God dwells, and everything finds its place in you. We worship and glorify you. Amen.