

'It's all about Him!'

What's on your mind? Not just right now – but all the time. If I was able to insert a USB Stick into the side of your head and download your entire thoughts for the last month into a file and then play them back or print them out – what would it reveal about you? Well, in short, it would reveal everything about you, because our thoughts govern our life. What we think is part of who we are. What we think determines how we feel and how we live. More important than all of that – our thoughts reveal Who God truly is to us, as opposed to Who we might profess Him to be.

If anything occupies our mind more than God; if Christ is not the very foundation of our thought processes; if He is not at the centre of our mind, then He is not our God and idolatry is a reality in our lives. What might those idols be which crowd God out of our minds and our lives? Perhaps it's money; perhaps it's our family; perhaps it's our work or career; perhaps it's our sport, or politics, or some social or environmental cause, or our car or our house or a combination of all of the above. Perhaps it's even the Church or ministry or the things we do in God's name. These can all become idols and if all our thoughts were played back, we would see those idols in clear view.

Whenever anything fills our mind more than God, we effectively despise His name without even knowing it. The Bible tells us that Jesus is everything – but do our lives transmit that same message? Let me remind you about this God Whom we worship and serve, this God Who has revealed Himself fully to us in Jesus Christ, as I take you to what I believe is one of the most powerful, most amazing, most confronting passages in the New Testament.

Colossians 1:15-29

"The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation - if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel.

This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant. Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness - the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord's people. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. He (Christ) is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me."

Let me ask you something. Would you like to know what God's will is for your life right now? Have you ever wanted to know that? Have you ever asked God to reveal His will to you? Well, I would hazard a guess that if I could somehow intercept all the prayers which are emanating from this earth right now to God – millions and millions of them – I would guess the vast majority of them have something to do with knowing God's will for us in some way.

Well, I am about to say something which may sound incredibly arrogant or pretentious – but that is often how the truth of God sounds to us at first until the Spirit of God reveals it to our hearts. Most of those millions of prayers seeking God's will are a waste of breath and a clear indicator that we don't know God or His Word very well at all. I can tell you all right now what God's will is for you – it is the same as His will is for me. His will is that you be transformed into the image of His Son.

2 Corinthians 3:18

“And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

That is what God wants. He wants the mystery of the New Covenant, the mystery of the New Testament Church to be a reality: Christ in you, the hope of glory. Christ in you! He wants to conform you to the image of His Son in every possible way. The Apostle Paul certainly knew that to be God's will which is why he devoted his life to preaching Christ and presenting the gospel of Christ to everyone he could until Christ was formed in people.

Galatians 4:19

“My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you ..”

Galatians 2:20

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

It's all about Christ. It's all about Him. Everything else is a distraction, or it's idolatry. Our problem in the modern western Church is not a lack of zeal for missions, or a lack of zeal for ministry, or a lack of zeal for the institution of the Church, or a lack of zeal for the many social justice issues which surround us; our problem is much greater – our problem is a lack of zeal for God – for the glory of God above everything and everyone else.

If you are zealous for God, if you realize what has been done, the purchase that has been made for you in order to save you from your sin and the wrath of God against your unholiness; if you realize the greatness of the One Who sits upon the throne and created the earth and everything in it and Who will one day bring it all to an end; if you realize that absolutely everything in this temporal sphere we call our life is dust and rot – then you will begin to have a zeal for God and when you truly have a zeal for God, then a true zeal for His mission will flow from that.

Do we truly have a zeal for God? Is Christ everything to us? Is He at the centre of our lives? Does He dominate our thoughts? Are those amazing truths I read from Colossians just words in a dusty old book or that they life-changing truth for you, today? Look at them ... really look at them!

“... all things have been created through him and for him.” (v.16)

We don't have a problem acknowledging that all things were created through Christ, but what does it mean to affirm that all things were created for Him ... when we realize that we are part of that 'all things.' You were created by Christ, **for** Christ. How might your thoughts change if you were to truly acknowledge that you were created **for** Christ? How different would your life be if those transformed thoughts then caused you to live for Christ, first and foremost, every day of the week?

"He is before all things, and in him all things hold together." (v.17)

Do you really believe that? Sitting here today, do you really believe that in Christ, **all** things hold together? Surely it can't mean ALL things. Well I looked it up in the Greek and guess what that word 'all' means in the Greek? It means ALL! What about this table? This building? Your car? Your house? Your family? Your own body? Do you truly believe that everything you know and experience and live as a human being is directly and deliberately and constantly being held together by Jesus Christ, the Creator of the universe and the Saviour of your soul? How literally are we supposed to take this?

Well, I confess that in my early years as disciple of Jesus, I didn't allow this to be taken too literally because the implications of that were too overwhelming. But as I matured in my faith and my understanding of our God grew, I realized just how true this reality is and we are most certainly meant to take this as literally as possible. Yes, it is overwhelming, probably because we are supposed to be overwhelmed in the presence of such an awesome God.

"He is before all things, and in him all things hold together ..." means that every minute of every day of your life is a gift from Him. Every thought, every ability, every action, every virtue, everything about you comes directly from Him. I want you to take a long, slow, deep breath right now ... and hold it for a second ... now hear the Word of God my friend, without the power of Jesus Christ, that breath would be your last and you would drop to the floor and your life which you thought you had some control over would return to the dust from which it came.

"In Him all things hold together" – that includes everything that is good about your life and this world and everything that is evil and heart-breaking – it all holds together in Him. If Christ were to step back for even a millisecond from His creation, from you and me, from this wonderful planet, from this universe and all universes created by Him and for Him, everything would disintegrate and vanish into the nothing from which it came by the will of God. Why is it important that we acknowledge that in Him all things hold together? Paul tells us:

"... so that in everything he might have the supremacy." (v.18)

In everything - in absolutely everything! Is Christ supreme in your life? Is He supreme in your Church? Is He supreme in this town and this great nation we call home? The answer is YES. Whether we acknowledge it or not. Paul was not asking us to 'make' Christ supreme. He was exhorting us to live in the shadow and within the reality of our Lord's supremacy. Everything you have and everything you are comes from Him and was created for His pleasure and His glory.

Even if the vilest, most wicked, God-hating atheist on the planet should stand before me now I would say the same thing: If there is any good whatsoever in your life it comes from the very one you hate and the only reason you are allowed to spew out your hatred and vile anti-God rhetoric is because that same God continues to give you breath and life – by His grace!

OK, I don't think you are squirming enough so let me sharpen the point here! Were you as excited about being here today in the presence of God with the people of God as you were about Ash Barty winning the Australian Open tennis final last weekend?

Were you as excited about hearing from God again through the preaching of His Word as you were about hearing that you are a grandparent for the first time? Is your mind pre-occupied with what God is doing in your Church and in the lives of those you worship with every Sunday? Back in the day before we could find them online did you record your favourite TV show or movie when you were not able to be there live and then you couldn't wait to watch it and see what was happening next?

Do you have the same commitment to what happens on a Sunday morning in your Church family ... the same sense of anticipation to listen to or read the message God has for His people – which you missed out on? When you have family or old friends coming to visit, does that visit so occupy your mind that there is not much else you can think about and you can't even sleep the night before they arrive because your anticipation is so high? Well can I ask if you have ever felt that way leading up to a Sunday service where the Creator and Sustainer of the entire universe, the One Who never breaks a promise and is always true to His word, has promised to manifest His real presence in the midst of that gathering? Have you ever had trouble sleeping on a Saturday night in sheer anticipation of what God is going to do and say the next morning? Do you arrive early because you can't bear the thought of missing anything God might do in the midst of His people? Of course we say and sing that Christ is supreme over all things – but do we **live** that reality? Do our thoughts reveal His supremacy. Are our minds renewed and focussed on Him above all else? If not, the Apostle Paul has the solution:

Romans 12:1-2

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God - this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Brothers and sisters hear the Word of the Lord today: Jesus promises you two things: a cross to die on and eternal life. He's everything or He's nothing. Jesus is not a component of our life; a segment in our schedule; a veneer on our worldly ways; He is everything and everything which exists was created by Him and needs to be directed back to Him in worship and honour and glory!

Let me close by telling you about Kate Barclay Wilkinson. She was born on August 27, 1859, at Woodlands Bank, Timperley in Cheshire, England. The daughter of a mechanical engineer, William Beckett Johnson, she married Frederick Barclay Wilkinson at St. John the Evangelist Anglican Church, Altrincham, Cheshire, in 1891.

Working with young women in west London, Kate was actively involved in the Keswick Deeper Life movement. During one Keswick convention, Kate was overwhelmed by this very concept I have been speaking about today – the supremacy of Christ and the mystery of Christ in us. Her heart was strongly touched by Paul's statement in Philippians 2:5 which says, *“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus...”*

The result of Kate's wrestling with the Lord was the gift of a hymn to the Church which has remained with us and been sung millions of times. Let's reflect on the words God gave her years ago:

*May the mind of Christ, my Saviour,
Live in me from day to day,
By His love and power controlling
All I do and say.*

If we are a true disciple, then we have the mind of Christ. We are indwelt by the Spirit of Christ. The question we face today, and every day, is: are we allowing the mind of Christ and His love to control all we do and say.

*May the Word of God dwell richly
In my heart from hour to hour,
So that all may see I triumph
Only through His power.*

How much of the Word of God do we digest each day, each week? How important is God's Word to us? How insatiable is our desire to meditate upon His Word day and night? The greatest witness we could ever have to those around us in our family and our community is for them to see first hand that our triumph and our ability to overcome the darkness and struggles in this life comes from God's Word within us.

*May the peace of God my Father
Rule my life in everything,
That I may be calm to comfort
Sick and sorrowing.*

When the mind of Christ lives in us from day to day – a peace which passes all understanding will become our daily experience and that empowers us to comfort others in their time of need.

*May the love of Jesus fill me
As the waters fill the sea;
Him exalting, self-abasing,
This is victory.*

'Self-abasing' is not a politically-correct term today. Our entire culture has programmed us to exalt ourselves and see ourselves as important, but when the love of Christ and the mind of Christ are real in us, He is the only One Who is exalted and this is the source of our victory in every conceivable area of our lives. When it's all about Him – everything starts to move in harmony with His Kingdom.

*May I run the race before me,
Strong and brave to face the foe,
Looking only unto Jesus
As I onward go.*

Kate takes the wonderful words in Hebrews 12 here and acknowledges our constant need to look only unto Jesus in the race of life ... not to our Pastor, our Church, our spouse, our family, our governments or our earthly heroes ... but look only to Jesus.

*May His beauty rest upon me,
As I seek the lost to win,
And may they forget the channel,
Seeing only Him.*

The result of our submission to Christ and our willingness to let His mind live in us from day to day, is the fruit of His mission – and that only happens, as Kate reminds us here, when those around us see only Him – Jesus Christ. It's all about Him!

Kate wrote this amazing hymn in 1912 – and what an amazing breath of fresh air this would have been to the Church then, as it is now, if we allow the Holy Spirit to burn the truth of this hymn into our hearts and minds. It really is all about Him.

Over fifty years later, a man by the name of Scott Wesley Brown wrote a song which also reflects the same essence as Kate’s grand old hymn. These words have been bouncing around in my head all week, so let me share them with you.

*I could wish you joy and peace
To last a whole life long
I could wish you sunshine
Or a cheerful little song
Or wish you all the happiness
That this life could bring
But I wish you Jesus
More than anything
'Cause when I wish you Jesus
I've wished you everything*

*I could wish you leaves of gold
And may your path be smooth
I could wish you treasures
Or that all your dreams come true
And I could wish you paradise
That every day be spring
But I wish you Jesus
More than anything
'Cause when I wish you Jesus
I've wished you everything*

It’s all about Him. It’s all about Him. Maybe those four words need to be on our fridge, the dashboard of our car, our bathroom mirror, our beside table . . . so that we are reminded from the moment we wake to the moment we switch off the light at night – it truly is all about Him.

I shall let the Apostle Paul have the last word:

Romans 11:36

“For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to Him be glory forever Amen.”