

Sermon Draft

Text: Colossians 1:21–29

Sermon: “All Things”

This morning, we’re going to develop a simple image that you can draw yes you, to illustrate God’s Good News for you and everyone in Christ Jesus. We’re going to develop a simple image that you can draw, to illustrate God’s good news for everyone in Christ Jesus. So, take your bulletin and a pen or pencil and draw a capital X. A big capital X. Leave a little room around it in case you want to add some flourish or notes or additional details later. But for now, draw a big capital X on your paper. You might think about “X marks the spot.” X marks the spot on a map to show you where the treasure is; X marks the spot where the goods are. So go ahead and draw your capital X now. You’ve got your X? Excellent. You’re doing great. We’re going to develop this simple image to illustrate that God’s Good News is for you and, through you, for everyone in Christ Jesus.

Last week, July 9-13 thousands of Lutheran youth and young adults and pastors and parents and volunteers filled the city of Houston, Texas, for our 2022 LCMS National Youth Gathering.

It's not only the largest gathering of youth in our church; it's also the largest single gathering of adults in our church! The theme last week was "In All Things." "In All Things." And all week long, all those kids and adults were digging into Paul's Letter to the Colossians. The theme verses for "In All Things" were Colossians 1:15–20, from the paragraph just before our reading from Colossians today.

There, in Colossians 1, Paul describes "all things." What does "all things" include? ***"For by him [Jesus] all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him"*** (v 16). "All things" includes . . . ALL things. Everything. All things include the bugs living underground. All things include our pets. All things include your homes. All things include all trees. All things include all streams and rivers. All things include all oceans and continents. All things include all planets and moons. All things include our sun and every star in the heavens. All things include all galaxies and every visible and invisible spiritual power or force or heavenly being. All things include ALL things!

So, what about all things? Paul goes on in verses 17–20: Jesus *“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, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. 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.”*

John says it like this, *“God so loved the world.”* The world. The cosmos. The absolute fullness of God’s creation.

The top half of our X shows us the extent. **(Gesture with arms raised in a V)** The boundless, limitless extent of God’s reconciling work in Christ Jesus. Jesus creates, sustains, and reconciles all things. Jesus creates, sustains, and reconciles all things.

And now we move to the middle of our X. The intersection of our X. Where it all comes together. We come to you (pointing at one person). In verse 21, Paul brings us to you (pointing at a different person). “And you,” he says at the beginning of verse 21. We move from all things **(gesture with arms raised in a V)** to you each of us **(slowly transition from arms up in a V to both hands coming together with fingertips meeting, pointing directly forward).**

From “all things” to all people.

Here, in the middle of our X, having heard and seen how Jesus creates, sustains, and reconciles all things, Paul speaks to you, and says: What Jesus did for all creation, he did for you. God doesn’t just love the “world.” He loves you! God doesn’t just love everybody. He loves you. You! Of all people! You!

And you know what else? He knows you. He knows each of us. He knows how far away from him we have wandered. He knows that our thoughts don’t line up with his thoughts. He knows that it’s much worse than just being out of sync. Our thoughts have been opposed to his thoughts. Our ways have been opposed to his ways. Our actions and words have spit in the face of what he values the most. He knows that. He knows us, the real you and me, the “you” we try so hard to hide from others that we sometimes even hide it from ourselves. He knows us. And still against all odds he loves us.

And his love for us isn’t just a feeling. He moves on it. He acts on it. You, who “once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him” (vs 21–22).

We can't miss the obvious, can we? An X is one of the shapes crosses could take in the ancient world. It's called the crux decussata, and according to tradition, St. Andrew, the brother of Peter, was crucified on such a cross. But every cross is a reminder of the love that Jesus has for each of us. As he hung in agony on his cross, the sin of the whole world on his shoulders, his heart was longing for us personally, individually.

God's Good News in the cross of Christ Jesus is for you. The top of our X shows us the extent (V gesture): Jesus creates, sustains, and reconciles all things. The middle of our X shows us the intersection **(move from V gesture to pointing forward with hands together)**: God's Good News of the cross of Christ Jesus is for you.

And so, we come to the bottom half of our X. Jesus creates, sustains, and reconciles all things. God's Good News of the cross of Christ Jesus is for you. And through you, God's Good News is for everyone in Christ Jesus **(gesture with palms together in center of chest and moving out/down to show spreading/expanding)**. Through you, God's Good News is for every "you" in Christ Jesus.

Notice Paul's progression. In verses 15 to 20, he describes the cosmic extent of God's reconciling work through Jesus. Then, in 21 to 24, he zooms in to show how God doesn't just love the world generally; he loves you personally. And then in 24–29, we see that God's Good News is not only for you but it's for every "you" in Christ Jesus. And how does God go about this? Through . . . you!

Jesus creates, sustains, and reconciles all things. God's Good News in the cross of Christ Jesus is for you. And through you, God's Good News is for every "you" in Christ Jesus.

“God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ” (vs 27–28).

Paul says to each of us: This is a mystery. A glorious mystery. Christ, the one who created all things. Christ, the one who is before and in and beyond all things. Christ, the one who reconciled all things by the blood of his cross.

Christ, the one who now lives eternally as King over all things. This very Christ is in each of us.

And Christ is at work through you. As we talk about his work and use our words to describe his work and tell anyone and everyone about his work in those words, Jesus is doing his work!

Now, I know we often say. “Not me. Not me. Paul, I don’t know as much as you. I’m not as articulate as you. I’m not as eloquent as you. I can’t quote the Bible like you.” And we are probably right. But guess what? It’s not about us. It’s Christ, in us. And Christ through us. Shares the God’s Good News of the cross which is for everyone.

Every person we meet, every person we see, every person we bump into, every person we’re stuck in line behind, every person who frustrates us, every person having a great day, every person having a miserable day, every single person that we encounter is one for whom Christ died. Every single out there is one for whom Christ rose. Every person we will see this week is one for whom Christ lives.

And every single one of you in this room right now, Christ is in you according to his word of promise. This is the moment of intersection. X marks this spot. X shows us where the treasure is. X marks where the goods are. This is the moment of intersection.

As broken people Christ comes to us bring us life, peace, purpose and hope. This is the moment of intersection. X marks the spot. Not just this building. Christ from eternity. Christ for eternity. Christ in you. Christ through you. This moment of intersection, this simple X, it goes with you because Christ goes with you.

Now may God, who has begun this good work in you, bring it to completion on the day of Christ Jesus.

Amen