



Colossians 1. ¹²⁻²⁰

¹²Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: ¹³who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: ¹⁴in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

¹⁵who is the image of the invisible God,
the firstborn of every creature:

¹⁶for by him were all things created,
that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible,
whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers:
all things were created by him, and for him:

¹⁷and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

¹⁸And he is the head of the body, the church:
who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead;
that in all things he might have the preeminence.

¹⁹For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;

²⁰and, having made peace through the blood of his cross,
by him to reconcile all things unto himself;
by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

After a two verse greeting, Paul informed the Colossians saints of the prayers he offered to God in their behalf: the things that he thanked God for (verses 3-8), and the things he requested of God in their behalf (verses 9-14). In today's reading, we hear a continuation of his prayerful requests (verses 13-14) followed by what many believe to be the lyrics of an early Christian hymn (verses 15-20). This hymn is filled with superlatives about Jesus and the preeminence that he possesses.

Over and over again, early LDS missionaries were encouraged to preach boldly.

“And speak freely to all; yea, preach, exhort, declare the truth, even with a loud voice, with a sound of rejoicing, crying—‘Hosanna, hosanna, blessed be the name of the Lord God!’”¹

They were “at all times, and in all places” to “open [their] mouths” and let their preaching be performed “with the voice of a trump, both day and night.” They were never, the Lord stipulated, to “suppose that ye can say enough in my cause.”²

Certainly, they could never spend too much time or energy in proclaiming the blessedness of the name of the Lord God. But, neither would they be able to say enough about God, Himself, His character, and His cause. No matter how lofty their rhetoric may become, they would inevitably have failed to capture the

¹ DC 19.³⁷

² See DC 24.¹⁰⁻¹²

grandeur of God. They would have sold him short. The subject was simply too expansive, far beyond the ability of the human mind to comprehend or the human tongue to describe or characterize. Nobody captured the impossibility of adequately describing God better than the great Nephite missionary, Ammon. In what is my favorite passage among many favorites, he confessed,

“Therefore, let us glory, yea, we will glory in the Lord; yea, we will rejoice, for our joy is full; yea, we will praise our God forever. Behold, who can glory too much in the Lord? Yea, who can say too much of his great power, and of his mercy, and of his long-suffering towards the children of men? Behold, I say unto you, I cannot say the smallest part which I feel.”³

But none of this keeps us from trying. And trying and trying.

In today’s text, we see Paul making a valiant attempt. The apostle loves the saints of Colossae. He thanks God for them, for his association with them, and for their faithful response to the glad tidings he had brought them. He pleads in prayer for them. He asks that they understand God and His desires for them. He asks that God bestow upon them a power akin to His own so that they might walk worthily and endure joyfully. He pleads that they will always feel the holy desire to express their thanks to an unfathomably generous God.

All of this brings us to our superlatives. A superlative word is one that indicates “the highest quality or degree.”

‘Kind.’ ‘Kinder.’ ‘**KINDEST.**’

‘Good.’ ‘Better.’ ‘**BEST.**’

As Paul contemplates the praise that the saints might express to God, a hymn comes to his mind. He recites it. This hymn is chock-full of superlatives. Jesus is “the *beginning*.” There’s a superlative for you. What is before the beginning? Nothing. The beginning is... well, the beginning.

Similarly, Jesus is “*before* all things.” In fact, we might call this one a double superlative: “*before all* things.” Is there something more, greater than *all*? Something “before” the “before”?

Jesus is “the firstborn.” Another superlative. No one is born before the “firstborn.” But even this superlative is not enough. It must be strengthened if it is to capture the grandeur of Jesus. Jesus is the “*firstborn of every* creature.” Though it may seem redundant, there’s another superlative: every. That pretty much covers the gamut, wouldn’t you say?

Jesus is “the head.” The head sits on top of the body. There is no part of the body that is higher.

And how about that “*all fulness*” for redundancy. One would think “fulness” would do the trick. Can something be fuller than full? But, no, something more is necessary: “it pleased the Father than in him should *all fulness* dwell.” The Father could not pack more of Himself into Jesus than he did. He is all in there.

“For in him [Christ] dwelleth *all the fulness* of the Godhead bodily.”⁴

Well, we get the point, I think. Jesus is preeminent. Yes, the hymn used that word too! “Preeminent.”

³ Alma 26.¹⁶

⁴ Col. 2.⁹

“That in *all things* he might have the *preeminence*.” Now the hymnists is just showing off, piling up the superlatives, one on top another. He uses the superlative “all” seven times—seven signifying perfection. Jesus is perfectly and completely superlative and preeminent.

Then again, the “all things” runs like a refrain throughout the passage. “By him were all things created.” “All things... that are in heaven.” “All things... that are in the earth.” All things... visible and invisible.” Indeed, as we have seen, he is “before *all things*.” By him “*all things* consist.” “In *all things* he might have the preeminence.” By Jesus, the Father does “reconcile *all things* unto himself.”

Whew! What a hymn! After singing it, I am ready to charge out and try my very best to share this incomparable Being with anyone who will listen—even though I know that I will not do him justice as all I might say of Him will come short of his greatness and grandeur. So, in the end, I join in the heaven shout.

“Hosanna, hosanna, blessed be the name of the Lord God!”

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

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