

Sermon by Rev. Michael J. Hoyt  
Glenshaw Presbyterian Church  
Christ the King Sunday  
November 25, 2001

**Meditation on the Christ Hymn**

Colossians 1:13-20

Paul's letter to the Colossians is a letter of encouragement.  
Paul wants his letter to have all the power he can possibly give it  
to accomplish its task.

So the Apostle reaches for one of the most powerful,  
and familiar, expressions of faith he knows:  
a hymn arising from the worship life of the earlier Christians.  
He incorporates this hymn into his letter.

The Christ Hymn, verses 15-20 of Chapter 1, of Colossians  
is probably the oldest remembered hymn of the early Church  
still preserved to us.

Translated into English, it doesn't sound like a hymn.

But, listen carefully, it is  
a beautiful expression of the Supremacy of Christ;  
carefully constructed,  
perfectly balanced,  
theologically complete.

**((Read Colossians 1:13-14 – introduction,  
then 15-20 – The Christ Hymn))**

In this hymn, we see the Christ of God  
the creative Source of all things in heaven and on earth;  
the One in whom all things hold together  
the One in whom God is at work to reconcile all things  
to God's self.

The hymn is cosmic because the work of Christ is universal,  
nothing and no one falls outside the bounds  
of the sovereignty of Christ.

It is this Christ who is the power of our baptism.  
In fact, what happens in our baptism is a daring rescue.  
We are citizens of God's kingdom, but we have been captured,  
and we are held as prisoners of war behind enemy lines.  
Our enemy is strong, cunning, and ruthless.  
All the powers of darkness and evil are at his disposal.  
Our enemy will not stop until we have been tortured to death  
by a life of sin and evil.  
But there is good news: Our Christ is stronger than our enemy.  
and Christ will pursue us relentlessly until we are freed.

In baptism,  
Christ becomes a one man force who descends behind enemy lines  
to rescue us, lifting us out of darkness and delivering us safely  
into God's kingdom.

But it is a costly operation – there is a casualty:  
the cosmic Christ made flesh must be pierced  
and bleed and die on the cross to save us.

It is in this daring and deadly mission of rescue  
that Christ's power and majesty are revealed.

Today, in this service, we will baptize Trevor Sami Naman  
in the powerful waters of this Sovereign Christ.  
We believe Trevor is rescued, the whole of his life,  
washed in these cleansing waters.  
We believe that wherever Trevor goes, he will belong to Christ  
who claims him today in these waters.

Today, we will all reaffirm the faith of our own baptism,  
in the words of the Apostles' Creed.  
We will remember our own rescue by God's Special Force,  
that we have been delivered from the power of evil,  
freed from our bondage to sin,  
to live under the reign of Christ our King;  
Today we will remember that wherever we go, we belong to Christ  
who claims us in these waters.

Today we will give voice to our commitment, our covenant,  
to nurture all who are baptized,  
in this or any other church;  
all those baptized whose lives meet with ours,  
in this or any other congregation;  
The commitments we make in baptism,  
as parents, the congregation, or the one being baptized,  
must be lived out in a Christian congregation, somewhere,  
but these promises are never limited to a single congregation.

The Church of the Cosmic Christ is One Church;  
The Church is Universal;  
this is what we mean when we say we believe  
in the holy, catholic church.

Trevor's father, Peter, was raised Presbyterian,  
and his mother, Christine, was raised Catholic.  
Today, they rightly affirm the unity of the faith of these two traditions.  
Having Trevor baptized here, they seek to show this unity.

What we do here today,  
we do under the Lordship of the Cosmic Christ,

who is everywhere, the savior of the world.

Thanks be to God for these waters,  
and for the costly rescue that fills them  
with power, grace and life.