

**CHRIST THE KING**  
**JESUS: THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD**  
Colossians 1:11-20

The material in comets may hold the key for scientists to learn the origin of the universe. In 1950, American astronomer Fred Whipple proposed that the nucleus of a comet is essentially a “*dirty snowball*” – a mix of about 50% ice, plus dark organic material and bits of rock. Some scientists call them “*Undercooked leftovers*” from the vast cloud of gas and dust that formed our solar system 4.6 billion years ago. Comets are frozen time capsules. If it were possible to capture a comet sample, even just a thimbleful of star dust, we could answer some fundamental questions about the birth of the planets and the origin of life on earth. But how would we ever capture stardust?

Actually, we already have. In early January 2004 the NASA spacecraft *Stardust*, launched five years earlier, flipped open a cometary catcher’s mitt made of aluminum foil, which gathered particles from the comet *Wild 2*, leftovers from the formation of our solar system. This priceless treasure, a thimble full of stardust, sealed in a re-entry pod, was successfully delivered by parachute to a test range in the Utah desert sometime on January 15, 2006 concluding a 10-year round trip journey of hundreds of billions of miles.

Scientists have been examining the make-up of the elements collected from the Comet Wild 2. They have confirmed what scientists expected, they mostly found older elements formed in the cold of deep interstellar space and not in the heat of the sun. One of the most interesting discoveries were traces of an Amino Acid, glycine, whose proteins make up the raw materials for the beginning of life. Scientists have speculated that life may have even been seeded on earth and throughout the Universe through comets. (Source, August, 2009 UK Sunday Times on-line article)

If a single container of not much more than a thimbleful of space dust can tell us so much about the origin of our solar system and life on earth, then perhaps it isn’t too hard to believe that a single, solitary person – Jesus – can tell us all we need to know about the meaning of life and our relationship with God. That’s what Paul tells us happened and is happening still in Jesus the Christ.

In a beautiful hymn of praise Paul says that Christ is the *image of the invisible God*, the *firstborn of all creation*, the one *in whom all things in heaven and earth were created*; he *holds all things together*; he is *the head of the Church*, *firstborn from the dead*, the *reconciler of heaven and earth*, and the *One in whom all the fullness of God is pleased to dwell*. Jesus is our thimble full of heavenly stardust. Jesus shows us what God is like.

In the words of scientist Robert Oppenheimer, “*The best way to send an idea is to wrap it up in a person.*” John the Evangelist put it this way: “*The Word became flesh and lived among us,*” and we were able to see with our own eyes the glory of the Father’s only Son, “*full of grace and truth.*” (John 1:14) The author of Hebrews said: “*In these last days (God) has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through*

*whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. (Hebrews 1:2-3a) The 2<sup>nd</sup> Century theologian Ignatius explained it saying that "by the Incarnation God broke his silence." Perhaps a little school girl put it best when she said, according to the poet John Yates, "Some people couldn't hear God's inside whisper, so he sent Jesus to tell them out loud."*

In Jesus we see God's compassion – out loud. In Jesus we experience God's power – out loud. In Jesus we find God's life – out loud. In Jesus we meet God's very person – out loud. For Jesus is *image of the invisible God*.

Paul says something else quite significant about Christ: "(God) *has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption.*" We witness that transfer from the power of darkness into the kingdom of light, in the thief who repented. Thankfully, it is true also for us.

What does it mean for you and me to be transferred from the power of darkness into the kingdom of Christ? Clearly it does not mean that we no longer have to struggle against the power of darkness and that we are safe and secure against all evil now that we belong to Christ! Even if we wish it were so, that is not the nature of Christ's Kingdom. New Testament scholar Oscar Cullman suggests that Christ's Kingship is something like the landing by the Allied Forces on the Normandy beaches on D-Day during WWII. It was the crucial turn of events that made the Allied victory inevitable. Of course, after D-Day many battles had still to be fought, and many lives would continue to be lost, but victory was at any rate assured. So, through Christ's death and resurrection God has assured us of the final victory, we may give our allegiance to him in full confidence that the mopping-up operations that we see around us only bring us closer to his final triumph over all the forces of darkness.

On the personal level you and I have been rescued from the power of darkness and transferred into the Kingdom of Christ in whom we have redemption and forgiveness of sins. It is in our baptisms, as we celebrate today for Madeleine Helga Faye Hoyte and Arianna Nickayla Lee, that we are transformed from the power of darkness and transferred into God's Kingdom. He has transferred us from darkness to light. He has transferred us from slavery to freedom. He has transferred us from guilt to forgiveness. He has transferred us from the power of the evil one to the power of God. Our true citizenship is in God's Kingdom, not with the power of darkness. All of us still wrestle with the powers of darkness, but it is a great assurance to know that ultimately we belong not to the dark but to the light.

Think of yourself as being released from the hold that the power of darkness holds over you.

- You are released from self-loathing and a sense of inadequacy; you no longer have to prove yourself worthy. You are released from that darkness and welcomed into a Kingdom where you are loved for who you are.

- You are released from all that you have done wrong, from your mistakes, your bad decisions, your selfish choices, and the guilt you feel for all that you have done wrong. You are released from that darkness because you are forgiven, you are washed clean.
- You are released from hatred and prejudice and envy and judgment and comparisons between one person and another, between one type of person and another. You are released from that darkness and are welcome in a Kingdom of love for all people.
- You are released from chasing after all the false and illusory things the world promises makes for happiness: wealth, prestige, pleasure, popularity, influence, strength, beauty, coming in first. You are released from that darkness and welcomed in a Kingdom that values charity and compassion, service for others, faithfulness and righteousness.

You are released – you have been rescued – from the power of darkness and transferred into the Kingdom of Christ the King!

In the baptism for Madeleine and Arianna we will each have the opportunity to renew our own Baptismal Covenant. As we do so let us celebrate and renew our personal release from the power of darkness into the Kingdom of Christ.

Jesus shows us what God is like. In a single human being we find the fullness of God. Jesus is the image of the invisible God. He is the heavenly stardust come to earth to show us God's very nature. And what is revealed to us in the face of Christ is God's compassion and love. **Amen.**