heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible” (vv. 15-176). All things came into being through Jesus, and without him, not one thing came into being. He has power over all things “and in him all things hold together” (v. 17).

That’s a lot to take in, so let’s break it down. Paul says Jesus is the “*image* of the invisible God” (v. 15). The word Paul uses for image” (Greek, *eikon*) expresses two ideas. First, Jesus is in the *likeness* of God, like the image on a coin or the reflection in a mirror. Second, and more importantly for us, that Jesus is the *manifestation* of God. In Jesus, God is fully revealed. If Paul meant that Jesus was merely like God, he would have used a different Greek word (*homoioma*), which speaks merely of resemblance. The stronger word used here proves that Paul knew that Jesus *to be* *God* just as God the Father is God. Paul wants us to know that “Jesus is the very stamp of God the Father.”

When Paul says that Jesus is the “image of the *invisible* God,” he does not mean that God is imaginary or likely to disappear. Paul means that God is unknowable, beyond our comprehension, inexplicable to our limited, human consciousness. But in Jesus, the unknowable God becomes known to us, accessible to us, present with us. In Jesus we see the attributes of God who creates, loves, heals, provides, restores, and reconciles. Jesus makes the mysterious God real for us.

Jesus is also the “firstborn of all creation.” As Paul used the term “firstborn” (*prototokos*) he probably meant both a priority in time and supremacy in rank. The term “firstborn” in no way indicates that Jesus is less than God. In fact, the ancient Rabbis called God the “Firstborn of the World.” In this sense, “firstborn” becomes a messianic title. Psalm 89:27 articulates this: “God said, ‘As I made Jacob a first-born, so also will I make King Messiah a first-born’” (see Exodus 4:22). Jesus is before all others, both in origin and in status. Jesus is before all others and greater than all others. With God, Jesus is the creator of all that came into being.

Unlike Galactus, *Jesus creates instead of destroys.* “For in him all things were created,” says Paul (v. 16). There is no doubt that Jesus is the author of *all* creation. He Himself is not a created being. When we behold the wonder and the glory of the world Jesus created, we worship and honor Him even more. According to Greek scholar A.T. Robertson, the phrase “all things were created” has the idea of “stand created” or “remain created.” Jesus is holding the very fabric of the universe together. All that is or ever was, exists because Jesus willed it into being and sustains it. Robertson adds: “The permanence of the universe rests, then, on Christ far more than on gravity. It is a Christ-centric universe.”

Bible instructor Sylvia Keesmaat points out that the phrase “all things” is repeated seven times in this passage from Colossians. She says this “reaffirms God’s commitment to creation, culminating in the reconciliation of all things both *on earth* and in heaven, making peace through the blood of Jesus on the cross.” There is nothing that exists without Jesus and there is nothing that is beyond the reach of Jesus. Jesus is both the unifying principle and the personal sustainer of all creation.

This means that when our world is falling apart, Jesus is working to pull it back together. When our plans go awry, Jesus is creating something new. When we feel overwhelmed by our sins and shortcomings, Jesus is “making peace through the blood of his cross.” Jesus is all about restoration, renewal, and reconciliation. Jesus makes us right with God and with each other, so that we will be “holy and blameless” and so we can “stand before him without a single fault” (v. 22). In every situation, we can trust Jesus to do this creative work in and through the church.

*Jesus is, after all, the “the head of the body, the church.* Paul probably means that Jesus is both the source of the church and the fullest expression of God’s will for creation through the church. Jesus gathered a group of believers and commissioned them to “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19), to baptize people, to teach them Jesus’ ways, and to partner with the restoration God initiated on behalf of the world. Jesus is the founder of the church, which is given power and purpose by the Holy Spirit whom Jesus sent to assist humanity in doing God’s work.

But there’s more! In Jesus all the *“fullness of God was pleased to dwell”* (vv. 18-19), says Paul. In Jesus that we see the fullness of God’s powerful love at work. The ancient Greek word for “dwell” is used in the sense of a *permanent* dwelling. There is an entirely different word for a *temporary* dwelling place. Paul wants us to know that Jesus is not *temporarily* God but is *permanently* God. The fullness is in Jesus Christ. Not in a church or a congregation; not in a building or a sacrament; not in a method or a program, but in Jesus Himself. Jesus is a “distribution point,” so that those who wanted more of God and all that God is, can find God in Jesus.

The apostle Paul has a lot to say about the church and the ways in which its members are challenged to behave. “Bear one another’s burdens,” he says to the Galatians. Do not “grow weary in doing what is right…let us work for the good of all and especially for those of the family of faith” (6:2, 9-10). Jesus is the head of a community that works for the good of all, building one another up so that all may have life, and have it abundantly.

Jesus invites us to join an adventure that is more exciting than a superhero movie.Jesus asks us to put our energy and imagination into being his representatives in the world today. Paul was one of the first to accept this challenge, as he became a “minister according to God’s commission…to make the word of God fully known” (v. 25). Paul wanted to reveal the mystery, and the power, and the joy of Jesus to everyone, so that they might experience “the hope of glory” (v. 27).

The same invitations are given to us today: To take a step toward making the word of God fully known, by what we say and what we do, to reveal the mystery of Jesus to those who need to see him, and to help them realize that God loves them and wants to give them a more abundant life. In a world that so often plays by the rules of Galactus, we know a better way to live.

In a world in which we often feel like Galactus is in charge, pulling our lives apart, Jesus is working to “reconcile to [God] all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross” (v. 20). Jesus’ amazing work goes far beyond what you see in a superhero movie, and best of all, it’s real! The Fantastic Four may be fun to watch, but real power to make a difference is found in Jesus Christ.

So, let’s show the world our superpowers. They come not from the invisible cosmic rays or superhuman abilities, but from Jesus who is the image of the invisible God. With Jesus at work in us, we can show people God’s powerful love. We can bear one another’s burdens. We can work for the good of all. We can share the good news of forgiveness and reconciliation, made possible by the blood of Christ shed at the cross.

When we join this adventure, we will be connecting ourselves to the greatest power in the universe: *The One who has always been, since this universe was birthed. The Savior who heals, helps, and forgives. The One who shows the power of good over evil. Not Galactus…Jesus Christ.*

Prayer: O Christ, your cross speaks both to us and to our world. In your dying for us You accepted the pain and hurt of the whole of creation. The arms of your cross stretch out across the broken world in reconciliation. You have made peace with us. Helps us to make peace with you by sharing in your reconciling work. May we recognize your spirit, disturbing and challenging us to care for creation and for those who most feel the effects of its abuse. O Christ, the whole of creation groans. Set us free and make us whole. Amen.

**Sources:**

* Guzik, David. Enduring Word Commentary. “Colossians.” <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/colossians-1/>.
* Keesmaat, Sylvia C. “Going Deeper: A Subversive Creation Hymn (Colossians 1:15-20).” *The Westminster Study Bible*(Louisville, KY.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2024), 2022.
* “The Fantastic Four: First Steps.” *IMDb*, January 15, 2025, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt10676052/>.

**Jesus Versus Galactus**

Sunday, July 20, 2025 [Colossians 1:15-28](https://biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians+1%3a15-28&language=en&version=NRSVUE)

Federated Church, Fergus Falls, MN

In the Marvel comics universe, there are not many villains as powerful as Galactus. A god-like figure with an insatiable hunger, Galactus sustains himself by draining planets of their energy. Galactus was born from a cosmic egg and has been around forever (since the Big Bang, at the very least). Galactus destroys worlds without regard to the people he hurts; Galactus simply wants to eat. “I am which has always been, since this universe was birthed,” thunders Galactus. “I am the hunger that dooms worlds. I am he who is beyond such frail concepts as good and evil. I am…Galactus.”

When Galactus comes to Earth, the only heroes who can stand against him are The Fantastic Four*.* The group is led by super-smart Reed Richards, AKA Mister Fantastic, who can stretch his arms and body almost endlessly. Sue Storm is the Invisible Woman, and her brother, Johnny Storm, is the Human Torch. Rounding out the team is Ben Grimm, The Thing, a former astronaut, now encased in orange rock and known for his catchphrase, “it’s clobberin’ time!”

Expect some clobberin’ when the new Marvel movie is released on July 25th. Called *The Fantastic Four: First Steps*, the film is set in a 1960s-inspired retro-futuristic Earth. Why the 1960s? That’s when Galactus first appeared in *Fantastic Four* comic book #48. The Fantastic Four must protect their home from being devoured by Galactus and his mysterious herald, the Silver Surfer. The only hope for Earth is the skill and the strong family bond of these four superheroes. Mister Fantastic, speaking for the team, says they do not seek fame; they just want “to make a difference.”

Fortunately, when we encounter our own world-shaking challenges, we have access to an even greater power. The apostle Paul describes an incredibly powerful cosmic being in his letter to the Colossians. Like Galactus, this being is one which has always been, since this universe was birthed; but unlike Galactus, this being saves instead of dooms.

Paul is talking about Jesus, of course. We often think of Jesus as a first-century rabbi walking the dusty roads of Galilee, and that is certainly an important part of who he is. But like a Marvel superhero, Jesus has a life and identity that go far beyond his earthly existence. Jesus is “the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15). There is no cosmic being more powerful than Jesus, “the firstborn of all creation,” for in him “all things in