

“All Things Reconciled”
Colossians 1:20-22
(Preached at Trinity, March 4, 2018)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In **Verses 13-20** Paul sets before us a glorious example of Christological preeminence. He holds Christ before us as Redeemer, the exact image of God, Creator and Sustainer of all things, Head over things, and in whom all fullness dwells.
 2. As we continue with **Verse 20** Paul sets Jesus before us as the one through whom all things will be reconciled to God.
 - a. Reconciliation refers to a restoration of relationship, of harmony restored, of peace reclaimed. It refers to enemies entering a truce.
 - b. Theologically, it refers to God no longer holding our sin against us. His wrath has been placated and the sinner is pardoned through the atonement of Christ.
 3. Sin has brought a terrible alienation between God and man – an infinite chasm exists and there is no way to bridge the expanse.
Colossians 1:21 NAU - "And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, *engaged* in evil deeds," - ἀπαλλοτριόω
 4. Paul used the same word in his Epistle to the Ephesians.
Ephesians 4:18-19 NAU - "being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; ¹⁹ and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness."
ESV & KJV translates it “alienated”
- I. At the beginning creation was a display of God's glory. It was a display of harmony.
 - A. The world was created in a state of perfection
 1. God pronounced His benediction upon His creation
Genesis 1:31 NAU - "God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good."
 2. Human beings were created in the image of God with communion with God. We were at peace with God.
 3. The Bible tells us that we were created to reflect God in righteousness and holiness
Ephesians 4:24 NAU - "and put on the new self, which in *the likeness of God* has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth."
 - a. Adam was created to reflect God's purity and moral perfection.
 - b. Prior to the fall Adam continually obeyed God
He loved that which was right and did that which was right.

- c. Calvin wrote: "Adam was endued with a right judgment, had affections in harmony with reason, had all his senses sound and well regulated, and truly excelled in everything good."¹
 - B. Human beings were created in harmony and fellowship with God
 - 1. Adam had a true and proper reverence for God – a godly fear
 - 2. Adam worshipped God in love and obedience.
He knew God intimately and enjoyed pleasing Him.
 - 3. Adam had the confidence that God was working for his good – that he was in a true and proper communion with God. He trusted God.
God was the source of all his comfort and confidence
 - 4. There was peace and harmony between God and man.
 - C. All of creation enjoyed this harmony
 - 1. Everything functioned without confusion or conflict.
 - 2. There was no disorder, no convulsing disruptions against the peace and harmony of God's created order.
- II. With sin came a terrible disorder and alienation from God
- Isaiah 59:2 NAU** - "But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden *His* face from you, so that He does not hear."
- A. There is an alienation between God and man. We have turned away from God and He has turned away from us.
 - 1. Fallen man has turned away from God. We can see it in the life of Adam after he sinned. Adam immediately fled from God
 - a. Instead of his conscience leading him *to* God, it terrified him and led him to flee *from* God.
 - b. Adam feared God, mistrusted God, he no longer understood God
 - 2. God has turned away from the sinner. God has given him over to a depraved mind.

Romans 1:28 NAU - "And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper"

 - a. Fallen man is alienated from God. He is under the wrath of God. This means that God's fiery judgment is already kindled. Hell's gates have already opened wide to receive sinners.
 - b. Paul said that sinners are storing up wrath to be fully released at the Day of Judgment

Romans 2:5 NAU - "But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,"
 - 3. In our lost condition we naturally resist God; we naturally flee from God. This describes the condition of every man since Adam.
 - 4. There is a great chasm between God and man
 - a. He is unable to think right thoughts of God
 - b. He does not seek after God in because he is unable
 - c. He wants God far away pretending He does not exist

¹ Calvin, John. *Calvin's Commentaries, Vol 1*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003). Page 952.

- B. Adam's sin affected more than just humanity
 This whole world is filled with decay and great violence and upheaval
Romans 8:22 NAU - "For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now."
1. We've witnessed the violence of nature throughout human history
 2. At the time of Christ the Romans didn't have a word to describe a volcano. They didn't know volcanoes; had never seen one. In the years after the death of Christ they became accustomed to minor earthquakes and tremors in and around Naples near Mount Vesuvius. In early August of AD 79 the wells and springs suddenly dried up around the city of Pompeii. On the afternoon of August 24, the mountain exploded with catastrophic force. Two pyroclastic flows engulfed the city of Pompeii burning and asphyxiating those caught in their path – a living city was buried beneath tons of fire and ash – nature was again writhing in destruction.
 3. Such has been the course of history. The world is filled with violence and it hasn't diminished in modern times.
 4. On August 23, 2005 Hurricane Katrina formed over the Bahamas, moved across Florida, and began its trek across the Gulf of Mexico. On August 29 it made landfall in southeast LA causing severe damage from Florida to Texas. Nearly every levee in New Orleans was breached. 80% of the city went underwater. 1836 people lost their lives. Nature was again writhing in destruction.
 5. Unprecedented rainfall fell on South Louisiana in August, 2016 resulting in what has been called "The Great Flood." Over 60,000 homes were flooded.
 On August 26, 2017 Hurricane Harvey made landfall with winds exceeding 130 mph. But it wasn't the wind that was ultimate disaster. Over the next four days areas of Texas received over 50 inches of rain with devastating flooding.
 On Sept 10 Hurricane Irma hit Florida after making a devastating trek across the Caribbean.
 6. Our whole world is a world of destroying winds, earthquakes, volcanic explosions, forest fires, floods, famines, plagues. Death and destruction is all around us. All of creation is suffering under God's curse. Even beyond our small planet, the universe is a place of disorder and destruction. One look at the pock marks on the moon tells us it is a violent place.
 7. Even the very ground is cursed. Instead of the lush gardens and fertile fields of paradise we find biers, thorns, and weeds.
- C. The result of this alienation from God is devastating
1. Everything around us is plagued with hostility – it mirrors a world alienated from God.
 - a. Paul's grammar in **Verse 21** describes a persistent, constant alienation.

- b. There are wars between nations. It would be safe to say there has never seen a time when there has not been conflict somewhere in the world. The fear of the nuclear holocaust threatened during the Cold War is once again in our thoughts as rhetoric of annihilation is back in the news.
 - c. There are conflicts in families – the divorce rate is still high but many today just refuse to get married
 - d. There are conflicts between employees and employers
Neighbors squabble with one another
 - e. Our two primary political parties are most characterized by strife, partisanship and political wrangling. There are even politically motivated riots today.
 - f. We are no closer to racial harmony
2. People cry out for peace but peace cannot be found
The chief problem they are at war with God

- III. What can be done to restore fellowship with God – where can we find reconciliation?
Colossians 1:19-20 NAU - "For it was the *Father's* good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, ²⁰ and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, / say, whether things on earth or things in heaven."
- Colossians 1:22** - "He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death"
- A. The word for reconciliation in the New Testament describes the change from enmity to friendship. There is both a verbal form and a noun.
- 1. The verbal form can be seen here in **Verses 20 & 22** - ἀποκαταλλάσσω
This word is extremely rare, perhaps only found in the New Testament. James Dunn writes: "It is used in literary Greek only here, in 1:22, and in Eph. 2:16 and was therefore quite possibly coined by Paul."²
 - 2. We can see the noun form in **Romans 5** - καταλλαγή
Romans 5:11 NAU - "And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation."
 - 3. **2 Cor. 5:18-19** uses both the verbal form and the noun
2 Corinthians 5:18-19 NAU - "Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation."

² James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: William B. Eerdmans Publishing; Paternoster Press, 1996), 102.

- B. There is a lot of talk in modern evangelicalism about being seeker friendly – gearing worship to appeal to the lost man. The truth is there is no such thing as a man seeking God.
- Romans 3:10-11 NAS** - "as it is written, "There is none righteous, not even one; ¹¹ There is none who understands, There is none who seeks for God;"
- Since no man rightly seeks God our only hope is that God seeks us – God must do the seeking.
1. If God had not come to Adam his condition would have been that of the fallen angels – forever condemned.
 2. It was God who sought Abraham while he was an idolater
It was God who sought Moses when he was a fugitive in Midian
It was Jesus who sought the disciples while they were fishing
John 15:16 NAU - "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit,"
 3. It was God who sought you
John 6:44 – "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day."
1 John 4:19 – "We love him, because he first loved us."
Luke 19:10 NAU - "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."
 4. It is God's sovereign will. The implication in **Verses 19-20** is it was God's pleasure for all fullness to dwell in Christ as well as to reconcile all things to Himself.
- C. This reconciliation was made possible by the atonement of Christ
- Colossians 1:20** - "having made peace through the blood of His cross"
1. Through the shedding of His blood Jesus has provided propitiation. God's wrath has been appeased and restoration has occurred. Peace has been restored.
Colossians 1:21-22 NAU - "although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, *engaged* in evil deeds, ²² yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach--"
 2. Through the redemption of Christ peace with God has been restored. He no longer holds our sins against us.
- D. As we consider our reconciliation with God we must remember our duty to seek reconciliation with one another.
1. The theology of reconciliation is important as we consider the principle of **Matt. 18**
Matthew 18:15-17 NAU - "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. ¹⁶ "But if he does not listen *to you*, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. ¹⁷ "If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector."
 - a. The situation is sin committed by a professing brother. Our duty is to go to him and seek his repentance.

- b. There are two possible outcomes to **Matt 18**
- (1) Your brother repents and there is reconciliation—the relationship is restored
 - (2) He doesn't repent and he is excommunicated—he is removed from the fellowship of the saints and considered outside the faith.
- c. In the case of repentance there is forgiveness and reconciliation
- d. Sometimes you hear people say he has repented but I just can't forgive him. Or, he has repented but I still hold bitterness in my heart. There is a word for this – sin.
- e. The model for us is God's reconciliation. With our repentance harmony is restored. Enmity is replaced with friendship.
- f. Reconciliation is radical. Peter says, "But Lord, what if he does it again?"

Matthew 18:21-22 NAU - "Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" ²² Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."

Matthew 6:14-15 NAU - "For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ "But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions."

3. God has forgiven us an infinite debt. Jesus described it in a parable
- Matthew 18:23-35**
- a. **Verse 24** – This was an incredible sum. A talent was valued at no less than 6000 denarii. A denarii was equivalent to an average day's pay. It would take an average laborer a thousand weeks just to earn one talent. This person owed 10 thousand talents. Even if the laborer were able to save all of the money he earned he could not be expected to earn more than 10 talents in a lifetime. This servant owed 10,000 talents – it would take over 1000 lifetimes.
 - b. Those with a hard, critical, unforgiving heart demonstrate that they know nothing of the gospel of Christ. Those who have critical unforgiving hearts condemn themselves every time they pray the Lord's Prayer.

Conclusion:

1. Reconciliation is made possible through Christ. There is no other way.
Romans 5:8-11 NAU - "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. ¹¹ And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation."
2. Jesus Christ is reconciling all things to Himself. In the end all righteousness will be restored in the universe.
2 Peter 3:13 NAU - "But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells."
3. This is the glorious promise of the Gospel. Paul always marveled at this aspect of His apostolic ministry and it is the pastoral ministry as well. In fact, it is at the heart of the work of every Christian in evangelism.
 We are calling lost sinners to be reconciled to God.
2 Corinthians 5:17-20 NAU - "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. ¹⁸ Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."