

## Only Jesus Can Reconcile us to the Father

### Colossians 1:15-23

This morning we continue in the sermon series called “Only Jesus.” I believe the topic is most relevant today. We live in a culture that is increasingly opposed to the Bible and its claims. For many, the Bible is seen as an archaic book which is out of date and of little use. The claims of Jesus, and the very reason for His existence, then seem to many as unnecessary and perhaps irrelevant. However, I want to state clearly and emphatically that the Bible is God’s Holy Word. It is eternal therefore it is timeless. Its message is as accurate and as relevant today as it was the very moment its words were penned and its books were canonized. The claims of Jesus are equally as relevant because, like it or not, receive it or not, Jesus’ life and actions prove that His claims are all true. He claimed to come from heaven and it was confirmed when God the Father spoke from heaven, “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” He claimed to be about His Father’s business and this was confirmed when he taught the scholars, healed the sick, and raised the dead. He claimed that He came to give His life as a ransom for many and this was confirmed when He died on the cross and cried out, “It is finished.” He claimed that when his body was destroyed in three days He would raise it up again and this was confirmed when, three days after His death, He arose victorious over death and the grave. His claims are all true.

I’m here to remind us this morning that Jesus alone is the Hope for all of the world. Where can we go for answers to life’s deepest questions? We can go to Jesus. Where can we turn when life seems to be falling apart at the seams? We can go to Jesus. Where can we run when we realize that we are helpless to change our situations? We can go to Jesus. Where can we go when we fear the future? We can go to Jesus. Where can we go to find unfathomable peace? We can go to Jesus. Where can we go to find unspeakable joy? We can go to Jesus. Where can we go to find unconditional love? We can go to Jesus. Where can we go to find undeserved grace? We can go to Jesus. Where can we go to find forgiveness and healing? We can go to Jesus. Where can we go to find life abundant? We can go to Jesus. All these things and more are found in one Person and one Person alone – Jesus. Throughout this fall semester we are going to see over and over again that the answers to our greatest need is “Only Jesus.” We first learned that only Jesus can restore our desire to grow in our relationship with God. Last week we learned that only Jesus can redeem us from our sin. Today, we see that it is only through Jesus that we can be reconciled to God the Father.

We live in a culture of religious pluralism where many want to believe that there are many ways for us to be right with God. Some openly accept other religions, some try to create their own system of moralism, and some do as the false teachers of Colossae who took a little bit from every group and try to justify it. However, it doesn’t matter what man does we can never change the reality that God has already declared. In **John 14:6** Jesus specifically said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” Notice that Jesus specifically said, “I am the way.” His statement left no room for any other way. There is no other way to heaven. There is no other way to experience the presence of God but through Jesus the Son of God. However, this goes against the norm of our culture. We live in a culture that doesn’t accept absolute truth. Many strive to be accepting of all and believe that what’s right for you is

right and what's right for me is right. We live in a culture that says there can't be just one way. They propose that there are many ways so just do what is right for you and it will work out in the end. However, this line of reasoning is directly opposed to the Word of God and no matter how far we go in rejecting Jesus it doesn't change the fact that He is still the Lord and that one day every knee will bow and confess that He is Lord. As we look at God's Word this morning we see without question that Jesus alone is the absolute ONLY way that we can be reconciled to God. Let's take note of three key truths about being reconciled to God.

## **I. The Person of Reconciliation (vs. 15-19)**

We start our text this morning with the simple statement, "He is the image of the invisible God." It is important to remember the context. Back in verse 13 we see that Paul is telling us about Jesus. In verse 14, Paul specifically says that it is only through Jesus that we can be forgiven of our sins. Then here in verses 15-19 he goes on to expound how we know that Jesus alone is the only One who can reconcile. There were false teachers who had entered the church who were teaching people that they needed laws and legalism and that the only way they could be reconciled was through their ability and works. The false teachers tried to show that Jesus was important, but they didn't think that Jesus alone was sufficient to bring about forgiveness of sins. Paul shows them and us that Jesus is more than enough to reconcile them because Jesus was God in flesh. In verse 15 he said, "He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God." The word "image" here means "an exact representation, a complete revelation." We all know that God is invisible. He cannot be physically seen. However, we do know that He reveals Himself in many ways. For example, nature itself reveals the existence, glory, power and wisdom of God. However, nature alone can't reveal the very essence of God to us. This is only available through One person – Jesus. He is the full image, the exact representation of God. If you want to know what God is like, simply study the life of Jesus. If you want to know how He cares for people, how He judges sin, how He moves in power simply look to Jesus. We see this all throughout the Scriptures. John testified of Jesus in **John 1:18**, "No one has seen God at any time; the ONLY BEGOTTEN God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him." This word for "explain" means "revealed" Him. Jesus Himself testified in **John 14:7, 9b**, "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him and have seen Him...He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" Here in Colossians 2:19 Paul clarifies that the fullness of deity dwelt in Jesus. The word for "dwell" means "a permanent residence" which is showing that Jesus wasn't temporarily God. He has always been and always will be the second person of the God-head. How do we know that He is the revelation of God? Three ways in these verses:

### **A. He is the Creator (vs. 16)**

Verse 15 says that Jesus is the "firstborn of creation." Jehovah's Witnesses like to twist this passage to suggest that since Jesus was created that means He can't be God, but that is not at all what this passage is teaching. The word "firstborn" in ancient culture meant "the supreme one, the high ranking one." So, "firstborn" was used to refer to authority and significance. For example, in **Psalms 89:27** God speaks of David and says, "I also shall make him My firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth." But, remember David

was the youngest of eight brothers. Yet God called him the firstborn. Why? Because as God said, He was going to make David the highest of the kings of the earth. It was a position of rule and authority. So, literally, according to Colossians 1:15 Jesus is the ruler and authority of creation. **John 1:3** tells us exactly how involved Jesus was in creation. “All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.” We often think of Jesus’ first miracle taking place at the wedding when He turned the water into wine, but according to Scripture Jesus’ first miracle took place in Genesis 1 at creation. **Genesis 1:26a** states, “Then God said, ‘Let US make man in OUR image, according to OUR likeness.’” Jesus was involved in creation. It is no surprise then as we read about Him in the gospels to see how the winds and waves obey Him, and diseases and death are removed at the sound of His voice. He is the creator thus He has authority over all these things. All things were made by Him, through Him, and for Him.

### **B. He is in Control of All Things (vs. 17)**

Jesus is in control and holds all things together. He is the One who prevents things from falling into a total state of chaos. He is not only the Creator of the world He is also the cohesion that keeps things working together. Listen to this assurance in **Hebrews 1:3a**, “And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and UPHOLDS ALL THINGS BY THE WORD of His power.” In the midst of all the chaos that we see in our world today, it is encouraging to know that Jesus is the sustainer of all things. I may not know what may come tomorrow, but I know the One who controls tomorrow and He has promised to never leave me or forsake me. He has promised to work all things together for His glory and my good.

### **C. He is the Chief (vs. 18)**

The church, the called out ones, make up the body of Christ. As the body of Christ we are directly related to the Lord. We are the body and He is the head. It means that He is the chief, the leader. **Ephesians 1:22-23** says, “And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” This ultimately means that Jesus alone is the leader. As a pastor, I am called to be an under-shepherd. But, who am I to follow? The chief leader – Jesus. IOW: Church leaders are to surrender the ultimate leadership of the church to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the One who leads and determines all things in the church. He also supplies the church with all that is needed for the church to thrive and fulfill His mission on earth.

We must be careful that we don’t ignore the final phrase of **verse 18**, “He Himself will come to have first place in everything.” It should be easy for Christians to recognize that Jesus alone is Lord. But we should note that He is God in flesh, the Creator and Sustainer of all things, and the Head of the church and because of this He should have first place and rule over everything! The false teachers of Paul’s day and of our day say that Jesus isn’t the only way to God, that He is one of many ways. But Paul reminds that Jesus is

Lord over all. Reconciliation is made possible by the only One who has the authority and the right to make it possible.

## II. The Plan of Reconciliation (vs. 20-22)

These verses show four unique aspects of the process of reconciliation:

### A. The Problem we Made

When I say the “plan” of reconciliation I am not suggesting that our problem was planned by God. However, I am saying that God’s plan of reconciliation didn’t ignore our greatest problem. In fact, there would be no need for reconciliation if we didn’t have this problem. We all know what reconciliation is. The word “reconcile” means “to restore, to bring to harmony.” Reconciliation is needed when a relationship has been strained, when two people have become distant, when a bond has been broken. By simply saying that we need to be reconciled to God it is clear that we are the ones who caused the problem. Notice the problem in **verse 21**, we were “**formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds.**”

Our first problem is that by our sin we were **alienated from God**. The Bible makes it very clear that what alienates us and separates us from God is our sin. **\*\*ILL:** Remember how Adam and Eve responded to God when they sinned against Him. They rushed to hide at the first sound of God’s voice after they had eaten of the forbidden fruit. We are often the same way. When we sin against God it brings separation. The separation that we experience with man is a simple reminder of our separation from God. **Isaiah 59:1-2** confirms this, “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not so short that it cannot save; Nor is His ear so dull that it cannot hear. 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.” Sin always causes division and separation in relationship with man and with God. **Ephesians 2:12** clarifies that without Jesus “you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.” Our problem is clear. We are all sinners in need of a Savior. Because of our sin we were completely separated from God and were without hope in the world.

Our second problem is that we were **hostile in mind** which **resulted in sinful actions**. **Ephesians 2:3** says it well, we were “indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.” The word “hostile” isn’t a very encouraging word and certainly doesn’t paint us in a positive light. **ILL:** Watching the news and seeing the hostile crowds in Charlotte. This is who we were and where we’d still be if not for the cross. When our minds are hostile to the things of God it leads to sinful action. According to **Romans 5:6-11** without Jesus we are described as ungodly, sinners, and enemies against God. This is our problem. That is why all throughout the Bible we never read that God needs to be restored to us. In every verse and every occasion, we see that we must be reconciled to God. The fact that we needed

reconciliation means that our relationship with God was broken. Since God is holy, we were the ones to blame.

### **B. The Price Jesus Paid**

We could do nothing to change our standing before God. According to Romans 5 we were literally helpless of changing things. But, praise Jesus, when we could do nothing to save ourselves and change our standing before God, Jesus did everything that was needed. Look at the change in **verse 21 & 22**, “You (and I) were... engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death.” Please picture this. Because of our sin there was a wide chasm of separation between us and God. Jesus willingly died on the cross to make a way for us to be saved and reconciled to God. Jesus did for us what we couldn’t do for ourselves. He gave His life so that we could be set free. He gave His life so that we could be reconciled to a right relationship with God. We were deserving of God’s wrath, but Jesus went to the cross in our place so that we could be saved. **Romans 5:6-11.**

The greatest public display of love the world has ever seen took place when Jesus stretched out His arms and died. The Son of God was scourged to the bone, crowned with thorns, mocked, and spat upon. Then He was taken to a place of execution, nailed hand and foot to a wooden cross, and hung up to die one of the cruelest and most agonizing deaths ever devised. There on that cross God placed on Him the sins of the whole world. Jesus became our substitute, bearing our sins in His own body – This is love. It needs to be clearly stated that this amazing expression of love was shown when we did not love Him. He first loved us. John Phillips said, “He could have hurled His anathemas across a guilty world, summoned from the ramparts of heaven twelve shining legions withdrawn and flaming swords, and marched to Armageddon then and there. Instead the loving Savior cried, ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do’.”

Friend, you may feel like nobody loves you and that nobody has ever done anything for you, but I’m here to tell you this morning that Jesus gave His very life for you. **1 Timothy 2:5-6a**, “For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all.” **Ephesians 2:13**, “But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”

### **C. The Peace Jesus Gives**

Because of the price that He paid for our sins we can experience peace with God. Romans 6:23 reminds us that the wages of sin is death. Our sin debt must be paid. By His grace Jesus willingly paid our debt and because He paid our debt we can have peace with God. **Ephesians 2:14**, “For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall.” **Romans 5:1**, “Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” So when Jesus died on the cross, He satisfied God’s judgment and made it possible for God’s enemies, us, to have peace with Him. Our “reconciliation” to God, then, involves the exercise of

His grace and the forgiveness of our sin. So, because of what He did our relationship has changed from enemies to friendship. Jesus said in **John 15:15**, “No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.” Are you hearing that? We were enemies now we are friends. We were slaves to sin, now we are adopted as sons. We were in a state of condemnation because of our sins, but we are now forgiven. We were at war with God, but now, according to Philippians 4:7 we have the peace that transcends all understanding. Peace with God is only possible when we have been reconciled to God. When we believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior we are reconciled to God. This means that conflict has been resolved, the relationship has been restored. God could’ve counted our sins against us, but through Jesus’ sacrifice He chose to cancel them.

#### **D. The Promise we Receive**

Here is one of the greatest acts of mercy that is difficult to fully grasp. It is amazing to know that Jesus gave His life in our place so that we might be reconciled to God. But that is not all He did. The last part of verse 22 says that because of His work we will be presented before the Father as holy, blameless, and beyond reproach. What a miracle of grace! What an amazing promise! Friend, the Bible says that Satan is the accuser of the brethren. He will lie to you and lie about you. He will say, “You are filthy. You know what kind of thoughts enter your mind. You know the things that you used to do. You can’t change.” But, if you have believed in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior that you are presented before God as holy. He doesn’t see your filth. He only sees the precious blood of Jesus that covers your sins. Then the enemy comes and says, “Look at all your faults. You’re full of them. You’re inconsistent, always messing up and stumbling, you can’t get yourself together.” But if you have believed in Jesus God says, “You are in Christ. You are blameless.” **Romans 8:32-34**, “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the One who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.”

**\*\*ILL:** Luke 15, the prodigal son.

Question, who had done wrong? Who had rebelled? Who wasted away his inheritance? Who lived in a loose way? Who ran away? It wasn’t the father, it was the son who had rebelled. The father stayed right where he had been the whole time. In fact, I believe that father was looking across that horizon every day waiting for his son to return. Finally, after some time the son returned and repented to his father by saying, “I have sinned against heaven and you and I am no longer worthy to be called your son.” Do you remember the response of the father? The Bible says that he had compassion on his wayward son and ran and embraced him and kissed him. He then looked to his servants and said, “Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his finger, and sandals on his feet; and bring the fatted calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.” This

relationship between father and son was reconciled. Isn't it a great picture of how God wants reconciliation between us and Him. But God didn't kill a fatted calf in order that we could have fellowship and reconciliation. Instead God gave of Himself and sent His only Son to pay the penalty of your sin and mine. Why? So that the partition that separated us from Him would be destroyed. What amazing love He has for you and me!!!!

Man sees the filthy rags, but God sees only the robe of righteousness. Man sees the waste, but God sees the beautiful work He is doing. Man sees our sinful behavior, but God sees the cleansing blood of Jesus. Man sees condemnation, but God sees His child. Man sees rejection, but God sees our humble repentance. Man sees our past, but God sees our promised future.

### **III. The Proof of Reconciliation (vs. 23)**

The little word "if" here has caused many problems for those who don't know the original language and context it was originally written in. However, it is fairly simple when you examine it. The word "if" here is not describing a condition that must be met in order to receive salvation. It is used to show that this is all because of salvation. The proof that we have been reconciled to God is that you continue in your faith firmly established and steadfast, not moving away from the gospel that you have heard. The proof of your reconciliation is that you will be faithfully devoted to the Lord.

**\*\*ILL: Apple Tree in full bloom**