

The Cross of Peace

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[0 : 00] So grateful to have Mbumi and his dear wife with us.

We're so grateful to have you, Martha, and what a joy it was to have you in our home the night to hang out and fellowship, and so grateful. When we were in Kenya so many years ago now, it was interesting because we were in Kenya we met, we stayed with the Matukis, we met and hung out and went to Kibera with the Makukus, and we ate Matoki, and I was having a hard time keeping it all straight.

At one point, I think I ate Makuku, and what's the word for mud? Joe told me the word for mud sounds familiar too, similar, huh?

Matoki. Matoki. Yeah, he really wanted to mess me up, so yeah. Anyway, so grateful that you are here and the work you are doing in the name of Jesus, for the glory of King Jesus, thank you.

And we praise God for you and for our partnership. Looking forward to come again. As we prepared for, as we come in now to the end of Lent, into Holy Week, and we look forward to the resurrection of our Lord, I want to spend some time with you meditating upon the cross and its benefits, and then we will meditate upon the resurrection and some of its benefits to us as the people of God.

[1 : 37] But the reality, Jesus was crucified, and he did rise again. That is the reality, and that is our hope. So this morning, I hope you will pray with me and open your heart to what God is saying to us in Colossians 1.

Let's pray together. Our Father, we are grateful for your word and for the work of Christ. Christ, we do not take either for granted.

Forgive us when we do. Forgive us when we do. We have this word to us written that we may understand and know what you have done and know you in it, and Christ has won for us eternity.

We have hope in this life and the life to come because of what he did for us on the cross and in the empty tomb and even in his ascension to glory.

We benefit. We are blessed among all people, above all people. We are blessed. We're not better. We're just blessed. And Lord, help us to walk in this blessing.

[2 : 48] Be with us now as we open your word. May you speak to us from this great book of Colossians. Oh, this great passage. Will you speak to us and open our hearts and move our wills and inflame our imaginations and love and thoughts.

Oh God, may we be the people of the cross. May we follow Jesus. In his name, grant your servant the ability to preach now, to preach with your power for your glory and the good of your people.

In Jesus' name, amen. Colossians 1, verses 19 down to verse 23. Speaking of Jesus.

For in him, all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. And through him, to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds. He has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.

[4 : 13] If indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation unto heaven.

And of which I, Paul, became a minister. Amen. That is the word of the Lord. Please be seated. Thank you, praise team.

That ride on King Jesus was just so inspiring. All of your music. Thank you. Thank you. In all things Christ preeminent.

I love that. That's the model of Covenant College. It always grabs my imagination. It comes from the verses here in Pelagians 1, verses 15 through 18, just above our text.

Jesus, in other words, is supreme because he is the creator of all things visible and invisible. Everything exists for him, including the church.

[5 : 19] This truth is what drives us as Christians. Who Jesus is. And equally important, what Jesus did.

This time of year, we pay special attention to these twin preeminent truths. They should drive and amaze us all year and every day. To answer the question of what did Jesus do succinctly, he brought peace.

This is what escapes humanity. We long for peace. We work for peace. We meditate for peace. We advocate for peace.

We politic for peace. We dream of peace. We talk about peace. And we even fight for peace.

But we don't have peace. Peace escapes us. It's like trying to grab mist. We see it, but we can't grasp it.

[6 : 30] Because by nature, human beings are peace destroyers. Not peacemakers. But God.

But Jesus. But the cross. Come into history. This Palm Sunday.

This Palm Sunday. As Jesus makes his way into Jerusalem for the last time. Let's recognize that he is on a mission of peace. And now he wants us to pick up this cross of peace.

Paul wrote the letter of the Colossians to help Christians resist the erroneous teaching coming from philosophy, human traditions, and religion of that day.

That these teachings seem to have diminished who Jesus was. They put him on the same level as some types of angels and other beings and thoughts and ideas.

[7 : 42] Paul gives us some clear teaching about the identity and work of Jesus. And that and its impact on those who believe him.

So that we even today can turn to the book of Colossians. And look and deal with the philosophies and false religions of this day.

The same way they did. Because spiritual teachings are many. There are many religions that reduce Jesus to a prophet or avatar or a good teacher or even a small God compared to the almighty God.

We're just one God among many. But we turn to the word of God. In particular, the book of Colossians. We see the supremacy of Jesus.

He is above and beyond all beings, isms, schisms, spiritual teachings, and spiritual beings. Nothing exists above him.

[8 : 47] And so we see the glory of who he really is. So I got a few points here this morning. First of all, I want you to notice, as we're talking about this mission of peace.

Jesus bringing peace. Beginning verse 19, I want you to notice that peace comes through the unique person of Jesus.

Unique person of Jesus. Notice again what Paul says. In him, all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.

Now, if you were to back up and back up to verse 15, he describes this uniqueness. He's the image of the invisible God. The firstborn of all creation. All things were created by him in heaven and earth.

Visible or invisible. He's before all things. In him, all things hold together. He's the head of the body of the church. Listen, he's talking about Jesus. And then he says, then he sums it all up.

[9 : 48] The big summary statement is right there. In him, all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. What does that mean?

It means that in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, we see all that God is and does. God's nature, God's character, and power are revealed.

He's revealed in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. John said it like this. And the word became flesh and dwelt among us in John 1.

The writer of Hebrews says it this way. Hebrews 1.3. Speaking of Jesus, he is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.

God's nature is seen in Jesus.

[10 : 53] This is why all the amazing things said about him are true. He did miracles of healing. He displayed command over nature. He knew people's thoughts.

He raised people from the dead. All this is true because of who he is. In chapter 2 of Colossians, verse 9, he repeats it and he says, For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.

He wanted to drive home. He wanted to make it clear. When we talk about Jesus, we're not talking about anything like him. He is unique. He is alone in his supremacy.

Nothing and no one is like him. And finally, when Jesus wanted to put the exclamation point of who he is, he himself rose again from the dead.

It's like Paul said in Romans 1.4. Speaking of Jesus was declared to be the son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead.

[12 : 07] Jesus Christ our Lord. You can't separate the cross and resurrection. It's hard to talk about one without the other. But I love the fact that Paul puts that so wonderfully that the resurrection, his resurrection said loudly and boldly and finally that he's the son of God.

Jesus, Lord, Lord, not Caesar, not anyone else.

Only one is Lord, God, boss of all creation. The gloriously frightening power revealed in his rising from the dead is the final proof of who he is.

Wow. So again, that's that summary statement. This is why everything else we're going to say can be true because of who he is.

We got to get that right and hold on to that because that's being assaulted in our culture. Who is Jesus? Now notice this. Peace comes to a unique person, but peace for all creation also comes.

[13 : 36] Peace for all creation. All creation comes through this Jesus, this unique person. Notice the beginning of verse 20. And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of the cross.

Jesus is the means by which all things in creation are reconciled to God, meaning God the Father.

First of all, what does reconcile mean? My pastor, Dr. Boyce, puts it this way. Reconcile means to remove the grounds of hostility and transform the relationship.

Remove the grounds of hostility. We got reasons to fight. But reconcile means it removes those grounds and transforms the relationship, changing it from one of enmity to one of friendship.

It's like when you have a marriage and you have a husband and wife and they're heading for divorce court. They're so angry with each other. They just can't make it work. But something happens and now they are reconciled.

[14 : 48] In other words, they come back together, put aside their hostilities and make peace with each other and their relationship is restored.

That's reconciliation. The relationship is restored. What Paul is showing us is that there is hostility and even, the word is enmity, hostility or an antagonism between God and his creation.

What? Are you kidding me? There's a war between God and creation? Well, yeah, this is the effect of the fall. When Adam and Eve rebelled against God, their sin didn't just affect people, it affected all of creation.

They were to be God's regents over the earth. They were to represent, image him in caring for the earth. And when they rebelled, their rebellion affected that which they were to rule.

And God came in the garden and he cursed the earth because of their rebellion. Remember Genesis 3, 17 and 18?

[16 : 06] Cursed is the ground because of you. In pain, you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles, it shall bring forth for you and you shall eat the plants of the field. God cursed creation.

Sin entered the physical realm. It already entered the spiritual realm due to Satan's rebellion. And now the physical universe was infected because of the rebellion of humanity.

And so all that Christ has made, remember he made all things. And heaven and earth has now experienced rebellion or the results of rebellion against God.

It's what Romans 8 says. Paul wrote it again, Romans 8, 20 and 22. He says, For the creation was subject to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

But now the whole creation has been groaning. Groaning. Creation groans under the curse. It groans. I'm convinced that things like earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, tsunamis, and drought are the result of the groanings.

[17 : 33] The groanings. The harmony of creation has been ruptured. Jesus, according to verse 16 of Colossians 1, created all things for himself.

And now, and now he has come to reconcile those things back. I mean, God could have just left us and left creation groaning, but no, the cross isn't just about us.

It's about the universe. It's about all of creation. And that's the, that's the method. This peace, this reconciling love comes through a cross.

A cross had to be born. A sacrifice had to be made. Blood had to be shed.

For the one who was the fullness of God had two natures, divine and human, so he could bleed.

[18 : 52] And he could die. He bled down the streets of Jerusalem.

Even before that, he bled in the garden of Gethsemane when he prayed and his sweat had blood in it. He bled as they tortured him before Pilate.

He bled. He bled as they, they, they, they whipped him which should have killed him, but they whipped him and he bled profusely. Then he bled.

Can you see it? He bled down the streets of Jerusalem carrying the tree, the cross upon his back. He bled all the way to Golgotha, the place of the skull.

There they nailed him to the cross and he bled some more. Finally, he died. It is finished. And then he bled some more when they pierced his side with the spear and out of his side came blood and water showing that he was truly dead.

[20 : 05] He bled out for us. By his blood, the creation, the creation is being reconciled back to God.

It's amazing when you think about blood in the scripture. You recognize in 1 Chronicles 20 and 21, it says that when David announced that Solomon would be his heir, you know what they did?

They sacrificed 1,000 bulls, 1,000 rams, and 1,000 lambs. Can you picture this?

The priests were standing waist high in animal blood. It was ghastly. It was grizzly. It was, what a sight and smell.

When they were burning these animals, that probably helped a little. But none of, all their blood together doesn't even amount to one drop of the blood of Jesus.

[21 : 25] He is the lamb that was slain. He is the lamb of God who reconciles the world. All of creation.

But it wasn't, but if it's all of creation, it has to include us, right? Peace comes to all of creation. That also means the cross brings peace to people too.

And Paul goes on to say that, doesn't he? And you, and you, not just creation, and you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in the body of flesh by his death in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.

Woo-hoo! Creation didn't lose us. He causes the war to be over between people and God.

He says, we were alienated, hostile in mind, doing evil deeds. What a description. I mean, separated.

[22 : 42] Hostile in mind. I didn't, I didn't, I didn't, I didn't do anything against God. Hostile in mind. In our thoughts, in our words, and our deeds, we rebel.

You can't escape your thoughts. As a matter of fact, Jesus shows us that it's, that sin, our rebellion begins internally. It begins in how we think and what we love and what we imagine before sometimes we actually do it.

in all of us. That describes all of us. Alienated, alienated, separated from God, hostile in mind, doing evil deeds.

No one escapes that description. Paul would say in Ephesians chapter 2 that we were without hope and without God in the world.

That's what this means. This is where he finds all of us. Evil, hostile, and evil.

[23 : 56] So is humanity basically good? I don't think so. So he had, he came to reconcile us to God because in our state of rebellion we could not make peace with God ourselves and saints we didn't want to.

But God sent Jesus in a real human body to face death, say face death the worst possible way, execution. by asphyxiation and blood loss on a cross.

that sacrifice paid, paid the price for all of our sins past, present, and future.

I remember talking with mom Mildred Protho whose home going service we had this past Monday. Sandy and I would visit with her and Carl and Karen and Ruth and I remember sitting down with her and reminding her that she's been reconciled to God through that sacrifice of Jesus that she now stands before him holy, blameless, and above reproach.

Above reproach means above accusation. God will not hear any accusation against her. That is true of all of us.

[25 : 36] that is true of all of us who trust in Jesus, who have that faith he's talking about in verse 23 that if indeed you continue, he's talking about a stable faith, a real faith, a living faith, a faith that is the gift of God.

If God gives you the gift of faith, it is a stable faith. It is a continuing faith. It is a faith that doesn't let go. Why? Because God is holding on to you.

at the last day, the day of judgment, we will be saved. We have been saved, we are being saved, we will be saved.

It's all under the cross. We don't earn it or deserve it. He gives the gift of faith and life as proof that it is a stable and steadfast faith in the gospel of this good news.

Now, listen, okay, all that's true. It's glorious and I hope you will go back to some time reflecting on it, but let's ask the last question.

[26 : 47] Let's look at the last thing. When we truly understand this reconciling love of God for us, it should cause us to live at peace with creation and with one another.

Amen. You don't tell me you know about the reconciling love of Jesus if you're not living at peace with creation and with people, especially the household of faith.

We are the people of all people. We are those who respect and nurture, first of all, creation. That's what Adam was called to do. And now we can pick up that charge for real.

Genesis 1, 28, God blessed them, said to them, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.

Have dominion over the fish of the sea, birds of the heavens, over every living thing that moves on the earth. We call this the cultural mandate, meaning, saints, we don't abuse creation, nor do we worship it.

[28 : 02] Christ has reconciled creation. Therefore, we who have received that reconciliation go into his creation with respect. In other words, we cultivate creation.

We mold and shape it. We image our reconciling Savior for his glory as we interact with his creation that he's reconciled.

So guess what? Your work matters. It matters a whole lot. What you do for work or vocation or whatever, it matters.

It should be in your mind a walking in reconciliation with all of creation. Your art matters. Your science matters.

Your family matters in this kingdom of God because you are God's agents of peace in his world.

[29 : 02] We don't abuse creation but neither do we worship it. Jesus reconciles creation so that you, his child, can enjoy it as you image and exalt him in all you do.

and all you do. Why is the world so beautiful? Why do we have colors? Why do we have taste buds? He wants you to enjoy.

Why do your eyes see in color? I'm told my dog doesn't. I don't know if he does or not. Somebody can tell me later, you bio majors.

colors. But we human beings see in color. He didn't have to give us that. We can feel textures.

All of these senses that God has given us, we can hear the singing of birds. Man, I love going out. I sit in my dining room and it's got all these windows and I'm looking out and I see these birds come by and they make noise.

[30 : 11] noise. And it's beautiful, Moomy, it's beautiful noise. I love to hear them singing. Sing on. We can hear, we can appreciate the sounds and then we create those, we make sounds and we call it music.

Smooth jazz in particular. But anyway, I mean, yes, all of the, God reconciled the creation so that we can go.

He's not done yet either. The new heavens and new earth, oh boy, hold on saints. Oh, creation on steroids. Eden got nothing. Eden got nothing on the new heavens and new earth.

You watch, you'll see. It's going to be even better because the blood of Jesus cleanses it. But we also are reconciled to one another in Jesus.

Not just to creation, to one another. The same blood that cleanses me cleanses you. No matter your ethnic background, social, economic background, what street you live on, what nation you are from, what language you speak.

[31 : 29] If we are in Christ, if we say we have been reconciled by the blood of Jesus, this means our hearts are being transformed from peace destroyers to peacemakers.

That's why Jesus says in Matthew 5 on the Sermon on the Mount, blessed are the peacemakers for what? They're the children of God.

Wow. Wow. Woo. We're God's children. We who follow Jesus are brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers of one another.

His peace giving love removes, listen, removes the barriers between us, not the distinctions. Did you hear me?

So, so, we are still all our ethnic identities. Mbumi and Martha are still African. I'm still African-American. Some of you are Scotch Irish.

[32 : 37] Then we have Japanese. Some of you, hello, come on somebody. All of those are real distinctions and because of the reconciling love of God, we can celebrate the distinctions.

The distinctions are no longer barriers to keep us from loving each other. We can celebrate. Man, I love my Scotch Irish brother's heritage.

Listen, don't you know I'm Irish? Kevin Smith. You can't get more Irish than that. I don't drink like my Irish brothers do, but I got a good, you know, something sometime.

That's a joke, y'all. Please don't. God, he says all Irish people are drunks or something. Please. I don't get any leeway here, so please understand that. I'm not saying that.

I'm not saying that. No, because of the differences. These differences don't keep us from each other like it does in the world.

[33 : 45] Remember, we're no longer of the world, of the surrounding world system that says we don't need God. Not that God anyway. Not the God of the Bible. We don't want him. We don't want Jesus sacrificed.

We can live without that. See, that's the world system. That's the world thinking, the world way of living that leaves the run true God out. We're no longer part of that system, but we live in the world.

And we become an outpost of the kingdom. We call it church. But that church is not just confined to a building.

That church spreads out across all lines. It goes all communities, all nations. It spreads out into all governmental systems. Wherever Jesus is named, that church spreads out and we have an impact.

We are the ones who bring reconciling love. So I refuse to judge you negatively or even positively because of your distinctions.

[34 : 51] You see, I'm at peace with God. I've been reconciled. You've been reconciled. When you're at peace with God, I can take the risk to love you. Because I got internal peace.

I'm at peace with God. I've been reconciled. My sins have been cleansed. I've been forgiven. I can stand before God and know that I am safe. Listen, saints, remember that.

If you can stand before God and know he will receive you, why are you afraid of a person? Another human being? If the God of the universe receives you, what can man do against you?

Sometimes we take the risk of loving one another even though our family, our nuclear blood extended family will look at us and say, are you crazy?

those people. But we say, no, no, those people are my people. My people.

[36 : 02] You are my people. Because we've been reconciled together. It's my honor and privilege to love you, to serve you, to seek your highest good.

That's what agape means. I seek the highest good. Don't talk about agape if you're not seeking the highest good of your neighbor, if you're not seeking the highest good of your brother and sister who don't look like you come from where you come from.

You don't know agape. The love of God causing me to love my brother. Oh my goodness, if we just believed it. you see, we are all the same.

We're all the same. We're looking for, this is the big deal in our culture right now, we're looking for identity. Identity is so huge right now.

And it should be. It should be. It's good. We're doing all those, you know, family searches, sending your blood to whatever you spit, whatever you got to do to send off and find out your family tree.

[37 : 20] You know, we're all, a lot of people are doing it. It's amazing. It's wonderful. I think it's brutal. I got one. I'm going to send mine off too. I bet you I come back mandingo. no, okay, never mind.

Probably Irish. But we're looking for identity. We long for it. We're struggling to connect with who we are.

Cut away the pigment of my skin and your skin. Cut away familial or national or cultural history. We're all the same. Sinful human beings in need of a peace that we can't find on our own.

Only Jesus can bring the peace, the reconciling peace we need through the fraud and that's what he's done. And when he gives it to you, when he gives it to you, as you trust in him, listen, he becomes right.

Christ is our life.

[38 : 33] Christ is our life. Do you believe that? Because that means that he's your identity. He's your identity. Whoo.

So anything I put before a Christian, not merely a name, though that can be telling, but in my heart, whenever I put before a Christian, my heart becomes how I truly see myself.

And that will cause division. Even within the church, it will cause division. we are Christ ones.

We are Christian. That is our identity before. I am a Christian who happens to be African-American. I am a Christian who happens to be male.

I am a Christian who happens to be an American. But Christ, listen, not just in language, brothers and sisters, we got to grasp it. That, when he reconciles, he reconciles for us to himself and for himself.

[39 : 43] Because he created all things, Clausewitz says it, for himself. That means your recreation in Christ is so that you might belong to him. No longer to yourself, Paul says.

No longer to you. We have been bought with a price. It is the blood of Christ. It is the cross. It is the price to buy you for him. And believe me, he is stingy.

He ain't giving you away. He will hold tight. What is your identity?

Are you reconciled to God through the blood of Jesus? Is that your identity? Is that first in your mind? if it is, oh, hallelujah.

You can live a life of reconciling love. You can live a life reconciled to creation, enjoying it, but not worshiping it and not abusing it.

[40 : 55] You can enjoy loving your brothers and sisters who look like you, but in particular, this is where the world struggles, right? But those who don't look like you and don't live on your street and don't have your background and don't vote the same way you vote and it's okay because I'm reconciled to the living God.

I'm part of the kingdom of the living God and Christ is my life. Nothing else is my life. Christ is my life. And he's coming to collect.

I'm excited. I think I feel like preaching this morning. And so we have that message, don't we?

That's our message. As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5, we are his ambassadors. We are God's ambassadors to take this reconciling message to a world that longs for peace.

They're looking for peace. Listen, the world doesn't have it. They're trying. They're seeking. They're medicating. They're doing everything they can to find peace and making treaties and deals.

[42 : 21] But they can't find it. Why? Because there's no peace inside. But you and I have the message. We are the ambassadors of this message of reconciling love.

So let's share it. Let's rejoice and share this love, the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Father, oh that we would truly walk in this message. oh that we would, we who have been given so much love, so much love, oh that we would pay it forward, as they say, that we would be conduits of that love, of that peacemaking, reconciling love of Jesus to all around us.

Help us to walk in it together. Help us to walk in it in our church. Help us to resist the enemy who keeps trying to pull us apart.

May we remember the reconciling love that you, that Jesus died to make real. May we fight for that love, even on our knees.

[43 : 42] May the world see that that Jesus is real. Bless us, help us, in Christ's name, amen.

Don't take it cat in Bereich Ayahu