

Sermon - 07-17-22
Ps 50; Amos 8:1-12; Col 1:15-28;
Lu 10:38-42
Creation Reconciled & at Peace

When Jesus was born to a young woman from Nazareth, the Creator God opened a door and stepped into human history. This was not just some big idea. This was not a philosophical construct. This was not a shimmering vision given to humanity as the ultimate self-help program. The coming of Jesus Christ is the unique, flesh and blood way God entered history to reconcile to Himself all His fallen creation once for all. It is the greatest event in the universe – the New Creation – nothing less. God has made a way for creation to be at peace with our Creator by the blood of Jesus Christ. Reconciliation and peace now.

The great saga of the Holy Bible is all about one thing – one immense burning desire of God – to bring back into His presence all who have turned away. We have studied the sorry state of the nation of Israel these past couple weeks. Idolatry – rebellion – sin of every kind – such is the depth to which humanity has fallen (even the people God made for Himself). To turn your back on God is to stand in your own shadow. It is the shadow of death, our pride – our despair against the Light of the word.

When God showed the Prophet Amos a basket of summer fruit, He was indicating that the actions and words of His people had come to their final end: Judgment. In our passage for today, God recounts the misdeeds of Israel's leaders – greed, dishonesty, enslaving the people, substituting an inferior product for the real thing. The outcome is Israel will be conquered and exiled in Assyria. It happened in 721 BC. The capitol city of Samaria fell to the Assyrian army. Everyone was force-marched to the enemy's land. No reconciliation – no peace. The time had not yet come for God to enter history as a man of flesh and blood. In fact, it will take a few more centuries for iniquity to be completed in Judah. In 586 BC Babylon will destroy Jerusalem and its temple and take the people into captivity for seventy years. This judgment will fall on both Israel and Judah because of their unfaithfulness to God's covenant of love.

Even in pronouncing judgment upon the nations, prophets brought the promise of Messiah – the Deliverer – the Savior. The beautiful hymn in the Letter to the Colossians is a description of exactly who Jesus Christ is:

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. ¹⁸And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. ¹⁹For it pleased *the Father that* in Him all the fullness should dwell, ²⁰and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. (Col 1:15-20 NKJ)

We western Christians tend to think of Jesus as our own personal Savior. I'm not contradicting this. *I am saying* that Jesus Christ is much, much more.

God entered flesh and blood in order to mediate for us – God has no flesh to sacrifice for human sin. No naturally born man could ever bear the iniquity of humanity.

When He rose from death, Jesus became the firstborn of the New Creation. The life He lives now is the life He gives to all who believe in Him. We have not yet seen the fulfillment of this working of God in the whole universe, including planet earth. John Calvin wrote:

“In short, since neither as God alone could he feel death, nor as man alone could he overcome it, he (God) coupled human nature with divine that to atone for sin he might submit the weakness of the one to death; and that, wrestling with death by the power of the other nature, he might win victory for us.” (*Institutes*, quoted in *The Word of Life*,

(Continued on next page.)

Jesus knows exactly who He was and is and will always be. This is not arrogance, but the understanding of the human-born Son of God. In our Gospel passage for today, Jesus tells Martha not to be distracted or worried about all the chores required to put a meal on the table. We seek to serve Jesus by serving others. It is true. Here, Jesus is saying that all the doing and accomplishing and struggling truly come out of a relationship with Him. First be reconciled to God – then be a peacemaker in the family, in the community and in the world.

The purpose of Jesus-followers is to share the love He has shown us. We are sent out to love others the same way God loves us. We the church are here to proclaim Jesus Christ. We begin by seeing Him as He really is. He laid down His very life to reconcile all things to God and to bring in God's eternal kingdom of peace.

When it comes to understanding the blood of Jesus – His sacrifice – grown-ups tend to objectify the working of that blood. But it is as real as the lamb's blood spread on the doorposts of Israelite homes in Egypt. The angel of death passed over homes that were under the blood. The working of Christ's blood has the same cleansing and protecting power now – only more so. Do not be ashamed of His blood. When you stand to face God, you are covered in the blood of Jesus – and so you are made holy and worthy to stand in His glory. Christ in you is the hope of glory.

Jesus was ***not just a good man*** who lived in the 1st c AD – Jesus is Messiah – the Christ – He is God, who gave Himself to reconcile all things to Himself – and to bring the peaceable kingdom here and now. Amen.