

## Colossians 1:15-22

Good Friday 2018

*"The preeminent God of all creation reconciles hostile people to himself through a bloody cross"*

### Intro:

Good evening, please open your Bibles to Colossians, chapter 1. Thank you for spending your Friday evening here with us, I know how precious Friday's can be. In our culture, at least, it seems as if Friday is a most coveted day. When my wife Lindsay and I did outreach ministry to JH students in downtown Chandler years ago, I remember a favorite song of the kids was the song *Friday* by Rebecca Black. Rebecca wrote a whole song about her immense enthusiasm about the last day of the work week, singing over and over... and over again:

It's Friday, Friday

Gotta get down on Friday

Friday, Friday

Gettin' down on Friday

Everybody's lookin' forward to the weekend

When it came out, that song was equal parts amazingly popular and quite annoying- a

dangerous combo. But, it became so popular because we do truly love Friday's, do we not?

Well, Friday is not only a great day because it marks the end of most work and school weeks. It

just so happens that God himself has done some amazing work on Fridays- two Fridays in

particular are the two biggest days in human history. We are here to celebrate Good Friday, but

there was a very good Friday even before the first Good Friday. On the first Friday in history,

when God wrapped up his creative work by making man and women, he stepped back and

proclaimed that things were very good- human history began. The Good Friday that we are

here to celebrate is that fateful Friday that all of human history turns on, when Jesus died on

the cross. Both of these Fridays are pulled together in one beautiful passage in Colossians 1:15-22 where we find that **the preeminent God of all creation reconciles hostile people to himself through a bloody cross.**

Let's read together, Colossians 1:15-22:

(Speaking of Jesus)

<sup>15</sup> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. <sup>16</sup> For by<sup>15</sup> him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup> And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup> And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. <sup>19</sup> For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, <sup>20</sup> and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

<sup>21</sup> And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, <sup>22</sup> 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

Our passage tonight pulls together Genesis chapter 1, specifically verses 26-27 and 31, with

John 19:28-31:

Genesis 1:26-27,31

**26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" ...**

**27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them... 31 And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.**

John 19:28-31

**28 After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst."**

**29 A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. 30 When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. 31 Since it was the day of**

**Preparation (that's a Friday), and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away.**

The God that said **“Let us make man in our own image”** as he topped off creation and proclaimed it as *“very good”* on *creation Friday* would mutter through blood stained lips in his dying breath **“it is finished”**, after paying the debt for the sins of his people on *Good Friday*.

In Colossians 1:15-22 we see the Creator become the sin bearer; the Preeminent One become the Sacrificial Lamb as he bears the bloody cross.

### **1. Preeminent God of All:**

- In verse 15 we're told that Jesus is the **“image of the invisible God”**- Since Jesus is God in the flesh, he shows us the nature and character and purposes of God who is otherwise invisible. This is why if you want to know what God is like you must look at the God-man, Jesus.
- Paul says that Jesus is **“the firstborn of all creation”**- now we need to be careful how read this with our English translations. Paul is not saying that Jesus is the first created being, in fact he is about to tell us that Jesus created all things. The idea of the Greek in the original context speaks not to birth order but to Jesus' status. In Biblical times the firstborn son was the heir of his father's estate; the oldest son had a particular honor and dignity applied to him. That's the idea here- **Jesus is the heir of all created things and he holds the highest place of honor and dignity.**

- Why does Jesus hold such a high place? Well, verse 16, **“by him ALL things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities- ALL things were created through him and for him.”** **Jesus is the Author of reality.** There was never a time when Jesus did not exist and there is not a thing that exists outside of his creative work! Let’s not stop before the last three words in verse 16: all things were created through him **AND FOR HIM!** Jesus is not merely the author of creation, he is the goal of all creation as well! All things were created FOR Jesus. **Jesus is the Author and King of creation!** Creation was designed to bring Jesus glory! All things visible and invisible, all things on earth and heaven, all things were not just created *by* Jesus but *for* him! **When you look at your life, you were fearfully and wonderfully made by Jesus... for Jesus! You were not created for yourself, you were not created for any other person or system on this earth- you were made for Jesus! To bring him glory by your joy in relationship with him!**
- Verse 17 **“Jesus is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”** Jesus is before all things in that, as God, there was never a time where he hasn’t existed and, also, he is before all things in importance and glory. He is the prize and goal of all things! He is the highest joy, the best thing, he’s at the top of all lists of good things- all good things find their source and goal is Jesus! Jesus is so great and powerful that in him all things hold together. He didn’t just spin off creation and walk away, hoping for the best. Jesus actively and compassionately holds all things in his hands sustaining and holding them together.
- Verse 18 is where our text begins to bring together the Preeminent Creator and the bloody cross: **“he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn**

**from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.”** Don’t miss the astounding glory of what’s going on here. **This verse is not accidental or incidental but gloriously intentional!** Jesus, the one who created EVERYTHING and holds it ALL together, the one who has always existed, the one who is before and above all things in honor and dignity, the creator and heir of all things... the Author and King of creation... has chosen to identify himself with a people- the Church. He connected himself as glorious head to a body of created people.

And this community is a body of people who are raised from the dead- a new creation. Jesus being the firstborn from the dead assumes many more will be raised. **Verse 18 brings us back to Genesis with creation type of language**- Genesis starts with “in the beginning” ... **“He is the beginning.”** **Just as Jesus is creator, sustainer, and before all things in creation, Jesus is the Creator and Beginning of a new creation- the church.** Jesus is not just gathering a people to worship, he is doing a new creation work- raising people from spiritual death to life with him.

Both creation and New Creation is the work of the Triune God. Just as God, by the Spirit breathed into Adam’s lungs and gave him life in the first creation, by the Spirit, Jesus is breathing life into dead souls as he builds his new creation. These people are raised from the dead just as Jesus was raised from the dead. Again, the “first born” language here speaks to his status as first and most important. That word “preeminent” means supreme, surpassing all others. The way that Jesus, the creator of all things would express his preeminence, his supreme status; the way that he would show all people for all time that he surpasses all others is by this new creation work of raising people from the dead and bringing them together with him as their head. **Jesus is the Author and**

**King of this new creation!** What is it that brings the preeminent God together with his new creation people? A bloody cross.

**The preeminent God of all reconciles hostile people to himself through a bloody cross.** That astounding reconciliation is what we find in the next verses!

## **2. Reconciliation of hostile people:**

**19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.**

**21 And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 22 he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death...**

- The preeminent God, the one surpassing all others, the creator of everything- far above in honor and glory- has chosen to reconcile or join all things to himself. Though he's infinitely greater than all of his creation, he desires to be reconciled or joined to it. Specifically, to a people, as we've talked about, the Church.

And how must he do that? What is the means of that reconciliation, what brings it about? **v 20**

**“making peace by the blood of his cross”, v21 “in his body of flesh”.** The mode of

reconciliation is a bloody cross- this is the Good Friday story.

We'll talk about why a bloody cross in just a second. But just think about that: the supremely glorious creator, Jesus Christ, has chosen to forever take on a body and be linked to a bloody, wretched, instrument of Roman torture and execution. The glorious one will forever be known and associated with, not only death, but death by one of the worst forms of cruelty in human history.

- The one who said, **“Let there be light!”** and there was, cried out **“My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?”** as darkness enveloped the land.
- The one who spoke the waters into existence and told the bold sea where to stop, asked for a drink as dehydration set in while he was pinned to the cross.
- The one who looked down on his perfect creation on that first Friday and proclaimed it to be very good, looked down on men and women who had betrayed him and raised him up nailed to a tree and pleaded, **“Father, forgive them for they know not what they do”** on Good Friday.
- Ray Ortlund Jr. **“God presented Christ Jesus as a propitiation by his blood. Do you see the beauty in that? In human religions, it's the worshipper who placates the offended deity with rituals and sacrifices and bribes. But in the gospel, it's God himself who provides the offering. At the cross of Christ, God put something forward.”**
- Verse 21 tells us why it had to be this way. Why a bloody cross for Creator to be reconciled to his creation, for the Author and King to be reconciled to his Church? V 21 **“You (and I), [were] once (or still are) alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds...”** You and I are alienated or separated from God because of our hostile minds and evil deeds. Meaning in our minds we are adverse, unfriendly, at odds with God- we treat him as an enemy. We do not want what he wants. **He calls us to worship and follow him, we choose to worship ourselves and do what we want.** As Author and King of all, his claim on us is total; it includes all of us, so our rejection of him is also total, we completely reject him. He says all of this creation is for his glory and purposes- including you and I- but we say we want to use it for our own glory and desires and comfort and purposes. This is what we call sin: a hostile mind

towards God and evil deeds. You and I, outside of this bloody cross of Christ, are alienated and hostile towards God.

But... We have this bloody cross to deal with and talk about. Though God is perfect and we are not, he desires to be reconciled to us. But we have turned away, we have declared God as our enemy- by our wicked deeds for sure and possibly even outright. This Preeminent God is always working for the rightful glory of his Great name, and so as a result he must punish sin and his enemies. The crime, hostility and evil against an eternal God must be met with equal punishment- eternal death. This is hell. This is terrible news. Maybe you think "God, can't you just ignore or look the other way?" This wouldn't be good or right- it's never good to let evil go ignored. A righteous person wouldn't just look the other way when outright evil is perpetrated from someone.

In order for reconciliation to this supremely glorious and good God, and because of your evil and my evil there must be death, there must be punishment, there must be a bloody cross. But the Triune God has a redemptive plan. God the Son, Jesus Christ, the one we just marveled at set aside his supreme status in the heavens to take on the lowly state of his creation. He lived the perfect life that every one of us failed to live- no hostility towards God or evil deeds- and he bore that supreme punishment in our place on the bloody cross to reconcile us to God, to himself. The Supreme One bore the bloody cross so that you and I might not be alienated but reconciled; that we may not be hostile towards God but have peace with God. As we'll talk about on Sunday, he rose again to new life to secure that redemption and initiate his new creation work in the hearts of all who believe. The bloody cross is for the reconciliation of all who trust in Jesus.



This is amazing, this is unspeakable- this is what makes Good Friday so good. And notice that this reconciliation unites us with God not just in theory but in reality- he is Author of reality. The result is that we are like this Supreme One in some measure:

**¶ 22 in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him**

Just as Jesus is holy and blameless, he is making a new creation- a people that are in him and are therefore holy and blameless. **On the bloody cross, Jesus, though holy and blameless, was treated as hostile and evil for our sins so that we, though hostile and evil, could be treated as holy and blameless.**

This is how the **preeminent God of all reconciles hostile people to himself through a bloody cross.**

### **Conclusion:**

Now what are we to do with this amazing news?

First, if you are not one of the reconciled people, I want to urge you to be reconciled to God!

Good Friday is such a turn of how we experience life: the one who is most worthy wants to be united to you and I who turn from him and choose worthlessness in our sin. And he would stop at nothing, even choosing to come down and be like us and die on a bloody cross to bring you to himself. Before you go cleaning yourself up to come to him, there is a bloody cross that still stands erect in the Scriptures to remind us that he isn't looking for clean people, he's looking for people that will trust him with all of themselves. It is an indescribable miracle that the One Supreme in Glory and perfection would seek reconciliation with us though we have treated him like an enemy, but he still does pursue reconciliation even tonight. Turn to him tonight. Trust in the one who bore the bloody cross so that you might be joined to the loving and faithful God of all creation in peace and joy.

And for those who say that you have been reconciled by Jesus on that bloody cross, let this passage stir us to greater awe of who Jesus is and the amazing depth of what he's done.

Though he is unfathomably great he stoops shockingly low in order to bring us to himself. May we never lose our awe of the bloody cross of Christ. May we never forget that we were once far off but are now reconciled, that we were once enemies but now have peace with God.

Knowing his supreme status as King of ALL may we more devoted to him a ALL areas of our lives.

Let's pray.