

Pentecost 9
July 17, 2016

"Peace with God in the Body of Jesus"

COLOSSIANS 1:21-29

Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. ²² But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation-- ²³ if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant. ²⁴ Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. ²⁵ I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness-- ²⁶ the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. ²⁷ To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. ²⁸ We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. ²⁹ To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.

What peace and comfort we share this morning as we hear the Apostle Paul tell us we are reconciled to our God and have peace with God through the physical body of Jesus. On the night of his resurrection from the dead, Jesus appeared to his disciples and said "Peace be to you." Then he showed them the nail marks in his hands. This was the physical and forensic evidence he had done everything necessary to pay for our sins and give us peace with our God.

The dear Christians living in Colosse were being told by false Gnostic teachers that there was a better way to have peace with God than the physical body of Jesus dying on the cross for us. There were teaching Jesus was a guide and guru who could help develop their own connections or link to God. .

To understand this false Gnostic teaching better let me use a scene from the original Star Wars movie. The Jedi warrior Obi Wan Kenobi tells Luke Skywalker how a Jedi warrior can feel the force flowing through him. He gives Luke the blast helmet that covers his eyes. Luke complains that he cannot see. Kenobi says, "Your eyes can deceive you. Don't trust them. Stretch out with your feelings." Luke is able to block the lasers by tapping into the power of the force.

For the ancient Gnostic and the modern new age person the human body is something evil that needs to be suppressed and overcome to tap into God as the energy force in the universe. The Christian faith finds our hope of being connected to God and being his dear children in the physical body of Jesus that lived a perfect life for us and offered a perfect sacrifice at the cross.

It is my privilege to speak to you this morning on these very comforting words from the Apostle Paul about finding reconciliation and peace with God in the physical body of Jesus. When this peace comes to you through the physical body of Jesus it also passed on through your physical body to others who don't believe.

Jesus provides peace with God through his body

We desperately need Jesus to step and accomplish for us what we could not do for ourselves. Paul reminds the Christians in Colosse how lost and helpless they were before knowing about Jesus. "Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior." These are strong words, "alienated" and "enemies" and "evil behavior." Evil is more than just purposely running a truck into large crowds of people and killing over 80 people. Evil includes the unkind words that are spoken against people we love. It includes the selfishness we show when we think of ourselves first. It even includes unkind thoughts we have towards others. This sinful behavior or evil alienates us from God. It makes us unacceptable to God.

The natural human heart likes to rebel against God. It considers God its enemies. Romans 8 says the sinful mind is hostile to God. Yes, we were born into this world with hatred for the ways of God and a hatred for the way God chose to save us and rescue us. See the boy verbally abuse his mother when she tells him he should be more kind to his sister. See him run to his room, slam the door and even say to his mother in anger, "I hate you." It's the same with God. People hate God and his word when he tells them they are wrong in some of the decisions they have made for their lives.

See how the Christians in Colosse once lived before they learned about Jesus. The people faithfully worshipped their false gods at shrines found throughout the city. They hated those who brought the message that they were worshipping false gods. They did not want to accept how lost and condemned they were. They refused to believe in God's plan to rescue them and save them through the physical death of his Son on the cross.

On August 29, 1947 my mother gave birth to a son and they called his name Steven Carl. Steven Carl was born into this world, "alienated" from God, an "enemy" of God and destined for "evil behavior." So it is with every person who ever takes a breath of life on this earth.

"But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation," Instead of being an alien to God and enemy to God, you are acceptable to God, holy, without blemish and free from accusation through the physical body of Jesus and his physical death on the cross. Normally reconciliation happens between two opposing parties when each one does its part. When it comes to our God, he reconciled us to himself by doing everything for us in Christ.

Jesus took all our sin upon himself. We illustrated this in our Bible camp using two powerful magnets. One way they oppose each other, and another way they cling tightly together. We showed how Jesus took our sin upon himself by putting magnet into some paper clips. He dies for the sin and removes it completely. That is the message of the

gospel. He didn't just pay for some and leave a little for us. He did it all. He cried out from the cross, "It is finished." Every sin of every person was all laid on Jesus. He paid for it with his physical body that was nailed to the cross. 2 Corinthians 5 says, "God made him to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

When Jesus was baptized the Father spoke from heaven, "This is my Son in whom I am well pleased." The Father accepted what Jesus did when he was baptized, and when he lived the perfect life we could not live, and when he died the perfect death in our place. Because of what happened in the physical body of Jesus for us, our Father is able to say to us this morning, "I am pleased with you." "I accept you." "I love you." "Living, loving, dying, rising, Jesus did it all for me."

Paul has learned from Epaphras that some of the Christians in Colosse are being led to think they need to have something in addition to Jesus to be sure they have peace with God. That is why Paul warns the Christians in Colosse, "If you continue in the your faith, establish and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel, This is the gospel you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven of which, I Paul have become a servant." Satan says, "It is not good enough to just have Jesus, you need to contribute to what he has done." My sinful flesh has a powerful ego that says, "You need to receive some credit for being a child of God." Christ plus anything equals nothing. Christ plus nothing equals everything. "In Christ alone, my hope is found.."

The Jedi warrior boasts about feeling the power of the force and tapping into that force. The Christian warrior, the soldier of the cross, finds peace with God in the physical body of Jesus. The Christian warrior wants to see his own physical body used and even abused if necessary to bring this message of peace in Christ to a world full of people still at war with God.

Jesus uses your physical body to bring his peace to others

Notice how Paul rejoices in the physical suffering he experienced in his body as a way to promote this peace in the physical body of Jesus to other people. "'Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.'" It is through the physical body of Jesus that we become members of his body, the Church. The Lord also uses our bodies our physical bodies to bring that message to other people so they can become part of Christ' body, the Church.

It was Paul who wrote in 2 Corinthians, "We bear about in our bodies, the dying of the Lord Jesus Christ." The Roman soldiers who saw the physical body of Paul as he was writing this letter from a prison cell in Rome would surely have noticed the scars on his body as a result of numerous beatings for the name of Jesus. His afflictions made up for what was still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions. What is still lacking is the need to use more bodies, bodies like yours and mine, to bring the message to the whole world.

The story is told of a man from India who went from village to village telling people about Jesus. His hardships were many. After many long days and long miles of walking and much discouragement, he came to a village. He tried to share the gospel with the people.

They rejected him and threw him out of their village. Dejected, he lay down under a tree and fell asleep. He woke up and found himself surrounded by people from the village who wanted to hear him tell them more about Jesus. Someone had passed by him when he was sleeping and saw the blisters on his feet. He told the other people in the village of what he saw and how this man must have something important to say because of all the pain and suffering he was going through to bring the message to them. Romans 10 comes to mind. "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring the gospel of feet." Might, we add, especially when they are blistered.

The mystery of the gospel is that the Lord wants all to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, even the Gentiles. Paul says, "To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me." Paul's physically abused body became the window through which people could see the peace that was freely given in Christ's physical body. It was Jesus who gave him the strength to carry on and work through physical pain to bring others to their Savior. It was Jesus who showed the disciples the nail prints in his hands and then said, "As the Father has sent me, so am I sending you." A church bulletin had this quote, "I am just a nobody, telling everybody about Somebody who can save anybody." I would like to rework that quote to say, "I am one body, one special body telling everybody about Christ's body that can save anybody." I am a warrior of the cross willing to use my body to let the world know how sin is forgiven through the physical body of Jesus. Amen.