

**SUNDAY 13<sup>TH</sup> March 2022.**

**HE CHOSE TO FORGIVE US**

**Scripture: Colossians 1:15-23 & Colossians 2:13-14**

How does it feel when someone says to you – I forgive you?

Do you accept it or wonder if they truly forgive you?

Do you experience difficulties afterwards to be fully reconciled with them?

Can you recall how it feels to be cut off, alienated from someone – parents, siblings, spouse, children, friends, colleagues. It is a deeply painful experience.

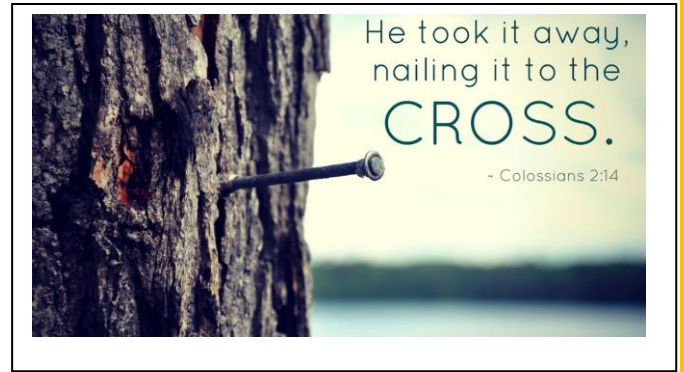
Behind every moment of human alienation lies its deeper cause. Behind every argument between Adam and Eve stands their disobedience to God.

When Adam sinned in the garden, he blamed Eve – marital strife began. Before that Adam rejected God's command not to eat the fruit. Before that Adam tried to conceal himself in the garden from God.

**First God – then fellow humans – that is the order of alienation.**

Paul says you can only be reconciled through Christ. Paul told the church – you must be reconciled to God through Christ as He is the only one who can renew our relationship with God.

Reconciliation is at the heart of the gospel. The word reconciliation means to renew a friendship or to restore to a right relationship.



*Jesus said in John 14:6 – I am the way, the truth and the life,  
no-one comes to the Father but by me.*

God came down to earth in human form as Jesus with the express purpose of showing us what He is like; drawing us to Him and providing the only way to be fully reconciled back to Him – through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

God sees each one of us through the eyes of Jesus and His sacrifice. God says – I have truly forgiven you, but many disbelieve this incredible sacrificial act and still put barriers up, meaning they are not fully reconciled to God.

### **Why did Paul write this letter?**

Paul was informed that the church in Colossae were being influenced by false teachers. Paul couldn't visit personally as he was in prison in Rome. The letter had to travel over a thousand miles east to Colossae. In his letter he warns the original hearers against "hollow and deceptive philosophy" and "false humility and the worship of angels."

### The false teachers were confusing the people by stating:

God would not have come to earth as a true human being in bodily form; He did not create the world because He would not have created evil; Christ was not the unique Son of God but rather one of many intermediaries between God and people and they refused to see Christ as the source of salvation, insisting that people could find God only through special and secret knowledge.

I wonder if you have read or heard similar false teaching today and, if so, how have you responded to it? Have you rejected it

because of the truth of the Gospel, or have you allowed it to penetrate into your heart causing confusion and doubt?

Paul responded by continuing to bring the argument back to Christ – to keep the focus on Christ by presenting the truth of the Gospel.

Christ is the image and the exact likeness of God and is Himself God and yet He died on the cross as a human being; Jesus Christ, who was also God in the flesh, is the creator of both heaven and earth; Christ existed before anything else and is the firstborn of those resurrected and the only way of salvation is through Christ alone.

**Jesus, as God in human form, chose to forgive us by giving His life on a cruel cross; allowing the soldiers to pierce His hands and wrists with nails.**

Nails – they fix broken things; they join together things that are separated. God used nails to accomplish His plan – to make things whole.

The path to the cross tells us exactly how far God would go to call us back. The nails in that cross show us the lengths God went to, to cover our sins and restore our relationship with Him.

God reconciled us to Him through the death of His Son, which canceled the record that contained the charges against us. He took it and destroyed the list by nailing it to Christ's cross.

Between Jesus' hand and the wood there was a list. A list of our mistakes; our lusts and lies and greedy moments and prodigal years.

**Why?** Because Jesus could not bear the thought of eternity without us despite the fact that we were His enemies – He chose the nails.

Jesus knew that the purpose of the nails was to place our sins where they could be hidden by His sacrifice and covered by His blood.

As His hands opened for the nails, the doors of Heaven opened for us.

**Imagine for a moment** – you decide to give a gift to someone you know well, just because – no special reason. You put a lot of thought into it and take time to create or purchase something you are certain will make this person very happy.

Before you give them the gift you may be imagining what the response may be. What is the best response you could hope for?

Now imagine a year has passed and you are helping this same person gather items for a garage sale. And there, on the table you notice your gift among the items designated for sale.

Which of the following would you most likely conclude:

- my friend no long values me or our relationship as much as they used to.
- my friend takes me or my gift for granted.
- my friend has had a change of heart about my gift.
- my friend must not have truly received or loved my gift in the first place.

How might your discovery of the gift in the garage sale impact the way you relate to your friend?

God left His home on a quest to bring us home.

His purpose was reconciliation – to offer the gift of peace to those who were His enemies.

Paul used the Greek word “echthros” a derivative of the Greek word for hatred. The literal translation of echthros = enemies = haters. It conveys the idea of someone from whom one can expect only harm and danger.

**The promise of reconciliation is peace with God – we stand “whole and holy in His presence”**

**Do you fully understand this gift given by God through Jesus?**

It wasn't an angry mob, jealous religious leaders or even Roman soldiers who crucified Jesus.

It was Jesus Himself who chose the nails.

*John 10:18 – Jesus states:*

*no-one can take My life from Me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again.*

Jesus was not a victim but one who made a sacrificial choice from a position of authority.

Part of the invitation of Lent is to take seriously things we might otherwise gloss over – not only the gravity of sin and our need for forgiveness, but also the depth of Christ's love and the magnitude of His sacrifice for us.

The nails in the cross show us the lengths God will go to cover our sins and restore our relationship with Him.

**Prayer:**

**Redeemer God may we truly live Your abundant life in the eternal now in which You meet us.**

**Riches lavished, celebratory feasts spread delights beyond our imagining.**

**Loved, restored, known fully, knowing You, with Spirit-softened hearts and new names that we may be “like a well-watered garden”, like springs whose waters never fail.**

**Your Spirit flowing from within us to bless others as we are blessed.**

**We understand the word JOY = Jesus first, Others second and yourself last.**

**In Jesus’ name we pray – Amen**