

Sunday, November 20, 2016

Colossians 1:10-20

Luke 23:33-43

Reconciled with Christ

Today we mark the end of the church year by sharing in faith and rejoice that Jesus is the Christ promised by the prophets of long ago. Jesus is also the one whom we connect with as we seek to follow his example of living as a whole person loving others. And it is Jesus who fulfilled his purpose by living and then was raised on the cross to die. He is the One we call Redeemer for it is through Christ alone that we may be reconciled with God.

But just who is Jesus? As His disciples we have learned in these last weeks that he is the one who will judge us and who will encourage us as we grow in faith even to the point that we become persistent. Jesus is the one through whom we pray to the Father because He himself prayed to God. He is the who loves us and offers us the hope we seek in this life and the promise of eternal life after we leave this earth. He is the one who ate with sinners, shared hope and stirred their hearts bringing about transformation in their homes and their lives and Jesus is the one who teaches us how to love and to live trusting him instead of worrying about everything.

But who is Jesus to you? Jesus is the Christ; the promised messiah the one whom the prophets spoke about and this messiah enables us to be reconciled with God. But are we really reconciled with Him? Do we really know him? Do you know this Jesus Christ?

On this Reign of Christ Sunday we will praise him and raise him up in our hearts as the Son of God, worthy of all praise but do we really know him inside our hearts so much that we can feel his Spirit moving us? Does Christ Jesus move you and help you in this time? Just think about this for a moment. Today the church brings to conclusion all that has been revealed and celebrated in the gospel story of God's work for our salvation since that story began with the hope of Advent last year. Today we rejoice and know that this story comes together for us into one concluding proclamation of Jesus—King of kings and Lord of lords.

What if you had 20 minutes to tell a person about Jesus and why they should believe, trust and follow Him. What would you say? What would you do?

The scripture reading from Colossians 1 tells us who Jesus is and that it is through him that we can see and experience God's glory. Through Jesus we are the ones who are able to leave the darkness and walk in his light. Jesus is the person of God, that is the image of the invisible God that we might relate with because Jesus is human, the firstborn of all creation. It is God who made all things – in heaven and earth, visible and invisible. All things were created by him and for him. And Jesus is God's Son, the second person of the Trinity.

But how would you explain your faith in Jesus as your Saviour? You cannot open the heart of another person to Christ but God can through the Spirit. Remember that God does not

call the equipped; He equips the called and as followers of Jesus, we are called to share what Jesus has done for us.

What did Jesus do? He died on the cross for our sake so that we would be reconciled with God. As we read in Luke 23, two men were led out to the area where crosses were raised in order to execute the criminals. When they came to this place Jesus asked that they be forgiven for what they were doing. Just a few short hours before his death, Jesus asked the Father's forgiveness upon them. They did not fully realize that he was the promised one, the Son of God and they were going to kill him. But those watching sneered at him, mocked him and even the sign above his head was written with irony. One of the criminals insulted him telling Jesus to save himself. The other rebuked him and asked that criminal whether he feared God. After all he believed that Jesus had done nothing wrong and yet he was getting the same punishment as they. This same criminal then asked Jesus—remember me when you come into your kingdom. And knowing that they would both be dying in a few short hours, Jesus told him that he would be in paradise with him through faith.

Paradise is what awaits all who believe; heaven, the kingdom of God, the promised home-- this is what awaits those who have been reconciled with Christ. For we believe that life is a gift that is eternal. By faith those who believe have realized that they love Jesus, strive to live a life by walking closely in the ways of Christ. They have also professed their faith admitting their sinful nature and been forgiven. And through this act of confession and forgiveness they and all who believe are reconciled with Christ. That is, forgiven loved and free knowing that one day we too will be with Jesus in paradise.

But how do we share this message? We need only share these 4 simple steps:

1. Share God's plan—peace and life—God's love, experience peace and life in Him.
John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life"
2. Share our problem—separation from God. But we need to know that by nature we are all separated from Him. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" so we need forgiveness.
3. Talk about God's remedy—the cross. Yet God loves us so much that he gave us Jesus to bridge the gap of separation between you and Him. Through Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection, Jesus paid the penalty for your sins. "He Himself bore our sins' in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; 'by His wounds you have been healed'" (1 Peter 2:24).
4. Our response—receive Christ. By receiving the gift of salvation, we become a part of those believers who are promised an eternal home with Christ. And we have received the right to be called God's children "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12).

As we reflect on this Christ the King or Reign of Christ Sunday one needs to ask again- do you believe in Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord? If not, why not? What prevents us from asking the questions in our hearts? What keeps us from knowing where we are going when we die? What stops us from knowing Jesus as our friend guide and Saviour? Maybe it is time to pray about this for as we anticipate the beginning of Advent, wouldn't it be great to know the Christ of Christmas? The new-born King, the promised one of God not only as the baby in manger, but the resurrected Christ and personal Saviour?

Just who is Jesus for you? And is he everything to you?

SONG by GAITHER GOSPEL:

He is the alpha and omega
The beginning and the end
The Son of God, King of kings
Lord of lords, He's everything

Messiah, Jehovah, the Prince of peace is He
Son of man, seed of Abraham
Second person in the Trinity