

Grace, to you in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen. The title for today’s sermon is “” and is from the Epistle reading, Colossians chapter 1. Let us pray... Amen.

Today is the Last Sunday of the Church Year. It is also called the Sunday of the Fulfillment. Today we look ahead to the Last Day when Christ will return in glory, to the Resurrection, and the final judgment of all people. For the world, for those who do not know Christ, those who reject Christ and His salvation, and for all the evil demons, or fallen angels, it is going to be a terrifying day. Yet for all of us who are alive in Christ, because “**He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son**”(Colossians 1:13), for all believers it will be a joyful and glorious day.

It will be amazing because Christ has already redeemed us from our sins and has freely reconciled us back to God. Christ Jesus came for you and I, and in Him and through His suffering, death, and resurrection, He has restored all things and all people, in heaven and on earth back to God.

Christ came for every person and everything in all of creation. God’s Word is clear, Christ came for every single person, no matter how sinful, mean, or twisted they might be. “**Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners...**”(1 Timothy 1:15), all of them. Christ came because everyone is important to God. Everyone and everything is important to God because in Christ He made all things and all things hold together in Him.

Jesus proclaims in the Gospel of John “**For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.**”(John 3:17

Christ didn’t just come for some, He came for each and every person who ever lived and ever will live. Christ came to deliver and save everyone from the domain of darkness. Christ came to save you and everyone in the world, because apart from Christ we are lost, condemned, and wretched sinners. Adam and Eve rejected God and their rejection gave birth to Original Sin which spawned actual sin. As a result they, along with all their descendents, were lost because of sin, under the dominion of darkness, condemned by the Law, and faced certain, and eternal death.

Yet, that was not the end of the story. The Gospel reading today shows us how much God loves each of us along with His whole creation. Christ demonstrated what He was willing to do in order to save us. Christ took upon Himself our wretchedness and our sinfulness. Christ took upon Himself our humiliation, our pain, our suffering, and our death as He was stripped naked and hammered to a wooden cross. There by the blood of His cross Jesus rescued us from our sins rightful reward and He reconciled all things in all of creation to Himself. There between convicted criminals, the Lord of all creation shed His blood and died to redeem all.

In Christ, God entered His creation and Jesus was able to experience both death on the cross and the resurrection from the dead. Through His sacrificial death on the cross, Jesus accomplished the reconciliation of the universe, and through Christ’s resurrection from the dead, He became the cause of the resurrection of all the reconciled.

In Jesus’ sacrifice, the Cross has both connotations for humiliation and salvation. The Cross was an instrument of torture, humiliation, and execution, but it is also the means of glory for both Christ and all baptized believers in Him because there Christ defeated Satan and all his demons, Jesus reconciled the whole world back to God, and by His resurrection gives eternal life to all who believe in Him. By His death on the cross, Christ rescued mankind by bearing the punishment and shame in our place. The past event of the cross is the cause of our reconciliation and peace with God. Jesus’ work of reconciliation encourages us to joyfully look forward to His return in judgment and glory, to the Resurrection.

We rejoice as we look forward in faith and trust in Christ to His return, to the Resurrection, and to Judgment Day. We pray it comes quickly because in Christ we have nothing to worry about before the Judgment throne.

Yet, as incredible as the comfort of Christ’s death and resurrection is for all believers, there are still people who do not believe and reject Christ and His deliverance. There are people, who because of their unbelief are blind to the peace of being reconciled with God in Christ. Instead, many scoff as they deny God, His works, His ways, and His Word. These same people also reject Christ, and they grieve the Holy Spirit.

As much as Malachi in the Old Testament reading was talking to the nation of Israel some 2500 years ago, he could just as easily be speaking to us when he tells of how people say, **“It is vain to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the LORD of hosts? ¹⁵ And now we call the arrogant blessed. Evildoers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape.”**(Malachi 3:14-15) In our world today, and even in Churchbridge, we see people actively rejecting the Triune God. We see and hear lies about what is good and what is evil in society and are told by unbelievers what should be accepted as holy. The Bible is deviously and deceptively assaulted by television shows which tell half truths, at best, to try to cause us to not trust God’s truthful Word. Ungodly lifestyles are not only tolerated but they are encouraged. The worship of false gods is celebrated on a nation and international level. Yet, the worship of the only true God and Saviour is discouraged and opposed. People still say, “What’s God really going to do about it?”, or as Malachi put it, **“It is vain to serve God.”**

But the time is coming, and is coming soon when Christ will return. We may count it slow by our watches, but **“The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.”**(2 Peter 3:9) As Christ came to save and reconcile the world, God also wants all people to reach repentance and faith before Christ returns on the Last Day so they can share eternity with Him. Despite what the world teaches or wants to sell, the truth is Christ did come for you, delivered you from the domain of darkness and God has transferred you to the kingdom of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

As Christ mediated the creation of the entire universe, so was His reconciliation which He accomplished. Christ’s reconciling work—His obedience, death, and resurrection—was for all and accomplished the reconciliation for all. As a result of the work of Christ, you along with the whole universe are restored to that harmonious relationship with him for which all things were created. All believers are reconciled to this status through faith. All people in Christ,

including you and I, we are already now reconciled to God willingly through the God-given gift of faith which receives His forgiveness, and together we will be completely restored by the resurrection of our bodies to the state of incorruption and complete harmony with God, our Creator and Redeemer.

Christ’s blood shed on the cross was to reconcile all people. Yet, for those people who die in unbelief and the rejection of Christ, they too are reconciled. For them, though, Judgment Day will not be a good day because they will submit to God’s will in the final judgment only by compulsion. Those who continue to oppose God will be ‘reconciled’ on the Last Day by being conquered. Those in unbelief will be ‘reconciled’ in that they will be compelled to submit by God’s judgment to Christ’s universal and ultimate authority. Their works and their sins will condemn them to eternal torment in hell along with the devil and the demons. It does not matter one bit how nice, how generous, or how good of a person an unbeliever is by the standards of this world; apart from faith and trust in Christ there is no redemption, no forgiveness of sins. As such, without redemption and forgiveness there is only condemnation, only death, only eternal separation from God.

But for all who have been washed clean in the waters of baptism, all who have heard, and continue to hear God's Word, you are delivered and saved from the domain of darkness and you have been transferred to the eternal kingdom of God. You didn’t do this, God did it all for you on account of Christ. By the same account, God will shortly invite you to His Table to feast on the body and blood of His only Son, Christ Jesus, for the forgiveness of all your sins and to give you a foretaste of the eternal feast to come.

While Christ has already accomplished His victory over the powers of sin, death and the devil for you, the full realization of this victory awaits its completion in the Resurrection and in eternity. This is the peace and paradise Jesus spoke of to the criminal on the cross next to Him in our Gospel reading when He said: “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.” Christ came to save sinners, all of us.

Christ is the goal of creation, for everything finds its meaning only in relationship to the crucified and risen Christ. By faith you are in Christ. You have been brought into Him who is the Mighty Fortress, from which nothing in all of creation can separate you from. You are redeemed, you are reconciled to God, by the blood of Christ. Eternal life is yours in Him. Thanks be to God. Amen.

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