

Colossians 1:19-29 (ESV) 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. ²² but 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,

When asked, "What does St Mark stand for," here is the answer. **1. "St Mark stands for the cross of Jesus Christ."** "It is literally at the front and center of our church and hopefully in our lives." "If I don't preach it the people can see it." When I explain to people in the community where our church is I often get this response. "Oh, that's the church that does PADS" or, "That's the church that has the rummage sale." Those are two good things to be known for, no doubt about it, but what we stand for as a group gathered by God for worship is the cross of Jesus Christ. We can spend a lifetime focusing on the work of Jesus on the cross and His resurrection and still have more to learn when we get to heaven. Your very soul, the core of your being, can never get enough of the message of the cross of Christ. So please be ready to hear more about Jesus and the work He did for us to save our souls for all eternity and give to us His peace while on earth, the peace of Jesus.

The book of Colossians is all about the supremacy of Jesus Christ. In my studies I have to ask myself, "Is Jesus supreme in my life?" Where am I allowing sin to reign over me and not Jesus? What idols have I set up for myself that I draw more from than Jesus? In our lives Jesus is either Lord of all or not Lord at all, so the saying goes.

Since I was a child, I have always had a fascination with the Titanic. The sinking of the Titanic brought out the best and the worst, the most sacrificial and the most selfish in human nature. Tradition has it that the band continued to play "Nearer My God To Thee" as the luxury liner was sinking. I am moved by that. On the other hand, hundreds of people jumped from the ship hoping to be picked up by a lifeboat and rescued. Those in the water screamed and screamed and screamed for help as if their very lives depended on the it, and it did. Listening to a survivor who was interviewed some 85 years later she said, "I will never forget the screams."

But worse than the screams were when they stopped for they were all dead.” Only 13 people were pulled out of the water and into a lifeboat. There were 18 lifeboats only half full. Only one boat returned and this was an hour after the Titanic’s sinking, when the thrashing crowd had “thinned out” (R Kent Hughes, Colossians pg. 36).

So many of us have this gut feeling that something in this world has gone wrong, terribly wrong. Instead of friendships being strengthened, people are choosing to reject one another and be permanently alienated from each other. During covid I read of 40-year friendships going south because of disagreeing over the vaccination, masks, and more. Lifetime friendships take a lifetime to build and to throw them into the deep sea over a political, social, theological, economic, and personal issue is so antichrist. Satan wants to steal, kill, and destroy those wonderful friendships that have been one of the best parts of our lives and he will use any issue to do it. Yes, something has gone terribly wrong.

As a society we are adrift at an unfriendly and unforgiving sea unable and unwilling to help one another and we are content in letting those we disagree with to drown and not be heard from again. It is called cancel culture. Say the wrong thing, use the wrong words and you are out, drowned forever, never to be heard of again, and all for saying something that offended a few people who are just waiting to be offended so they can cancel you out of their lives. They enjoy seeing you go down because they felt their personal rights were stamped on. Self-righteousness can be a killer. For example, people’s feelings were hurt because you said something about only women can have babies and not men.” That is a no no today because things are so turned upside down. Evil is now good and good is now evil.

The wrongness of everything points to the downfall of human friendships, relationships, and people’s estrangement from God and each other due to sin. The Titanic is a word picture of a world desperately in need of reconciliation and the harmony and rightness that it brings (Ibid. pg. 36). Human beings are as alienated from God now as we have been since the fall. The

entire creation is in desperate need of reconciliation and that is why Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven, so we can be reconciled to God and to one another. The cross is the ministry of reconciliation, and it is what we stand for as a church in a fallen world which no longer has any respect for the Bible, Jesus, and the cross. When we are reconciled to God and each other, we hear the screams of those around us and do our best to pull them out of the freezing water. When we are reconciled to God and each other, we do everything we can to honor God and build each other up. When we are reconciled to God and to each other, we are free to disagree with each other and remain friends. Satan is the rejector and Jesus is the acceptor. I can see Jesus diving into the water to pull up and save those who were perishing.

“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.” ²² but he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death. Every word that Jesus spoke was the very word of God for the fullness of God dwells in Jesus. Jesus did everything right, perfect, and good in every way. Jesus came so we can be reconciled to God and each other. The price He paid for this to occur was His death on the cross. This will be completely fulfilled when Jesus comes again. All of heaven and earth will be reconciled and we have that to look forward too. Every relationship will be even better than we ever thought possible. No more Lust, Gluttony, Greed, Sloth, Wrath, Envy, or Pride, commonly known as the 7 deadly sins. No more sin, period.

Please hear this. Every human being is created in the image of God. God created us male and female, and we are made in the image of God. God is the essence of relationship. There was a time in eternity past when all there was was God. I have a great sermon in my office by Dr Erwin Lutzer of the Moody Church entitled, “When God was Alone.” Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in complete harmony with each other. They have never fought or had an

argument. At the core of our beings, we are made to be in relationship with God and with each other. Jesus has made it possible for this to happen in our lives so on this earth we can enjoy rich and deep fellowship with God and each other. It is what we were made for. To be estranged from each other goes against the very fiber of our souls. To neglect God is the ultimate of sins.

Okay pastor, please get to the meat of your sermon. This is already getting to be a little long. There was a husband and wife whose relationship went south, and they became completely estranged. The husband moved a thousand miles away but at one point had to return for business purposes. He went to the grave of their only son and went into deep thought and felt the sadness of his death. He heard a sound behind him and turned to see his estranged wife. They both wanted to turn away and run. Instead, they stood together and held hands over the grave of their son and were reconciled. They were reconciled by death (ibid. pg. 38).

God has us on this earth to love God and to love each other. We will be held accountable on judgment day for the ways we treated each other, for what we said to one another.

When at the farm last week, I was asked to visit an elderly person who is not long for this world. This person rarely, if ever, attended church and is close to 90. For whatever reason he is more open than ever for the Gospel and believe it or not, this person likes me. Why he likes me I have no idea. At the end of the visit, he agreed to let me lead him in prayer. Dear Jesus, thank you for going to the cross and dying for my sins. Please forgive me my sins. In the name of Jesus. Amen. After he said those words I said, "All of your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." The look on his face was priceless. The blood of Jesus did a cleansing work in his life. It is the blood of Jesus that reconciles us to God. What do we receive when we have Communion? We receive The Body and Blood of Christ. Reconciliation between God and you, between God and me can take place in prayer asking for forgiveness. It takes place when we participate in the sacraments. God's grace abounds. Our sins are gone forever never to be held against us again. NEVER!

2 Corinthians 5:18 (ESV) ¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. Now I know what I hear when I walk into a group of people that I do not even know anyone. I hear the cries of those wanting to be reconciled to God. How dare I ignore those cries. I'm in the lifeboat and I want to see as many people possible saved in prayer by God's grace through faith. I cannot be quiet. I can't ignore the screams of those who are perishing.

2 Corinthians 5:19 (NLT2) ¹⁹ For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. 2 Corinthians 5:21 (NLT2) ²¹ For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

Having been reconciled to God, God also asks of us to be reconciled to each other, to be at peace with each other. **Romans 12:18 (NIV) ¹⁸ If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.** The Bible never says, "reject each other." It says be at peace with one another. When God gives to you His grace of forgiveness of sins, there is grace right there for you to let go of, to forgive any and everyone who has offended you. Grace to forgive each other is amazing grace. Loving one another in Christ is what the Christian life is all about. The Holy Spirit inside of you urges you to be at peace with others if at all possible. This can occur because of Jesus' finished work on the cross where all reconciliation takes place.

Some in this church have been hurt by people in this church. You might even be bleeding all over the place. The Lord Jesus can stop the blood flow by His blood shed on the cross empowering you to forgive and move forward in life. The blood of Jesus has the ability to heal, for by His stripes we are healed.

I close this sermon with these personal applications. How does God reconcile us and bring peace in relationships? 1. In your dreams. Throughout my lifetime I have had dreams of people that I was estranged from. Three weeks ago, I had such a dream. I saw the person that I

did not want to see and walked up to him and hugged him and told him I loved him and bawled my eyes out. I came to church, called him, and told him of my dream. He said to me, "Of all days to call me, I can't believe it was today" and then he opened up about his own struggles.

2. The Holy Spirit supernaturally sees your pain and brings the right truth into your life that sets you free. It is a work of the Holy Spirit changing and reshaping your attitude and more. The next time you see the person that grudge is no longer there, and you feel a new freedom in Christ.

3. You apply Matthew 18, and you tell the person how much he or she has hurt you. They may say, as I have often said, "I had no idea." "Thank you for being so honest" and the relationship is healed. I know it does not always work out this way, but it is always worth a try.

4. If you know someone is holding a grudge against you, before you take Holy Communion go to that person and seek to be reconciled, then you will be ready to receive Holy Communion.

5. No matter what position your friend takes on various issues that you disagree with, Agree To Disagree In Love. The friendship is more important than your own opinions.

Jesus died on the cross so we can be reconciled to God and to each other. God has given to us as His children the ministry of reconciliation. Amen and Amen.