



Sermon – October 18, 2020  
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**Verses Covered This Week**

*Colossians 1:19-20*

*Romans 8:19 - 21*

Let's open our Bibles together to Colossians chapter 1. We're going to be in verses 19 and 20 this morning. Colossians 1:19 and 20. And if you're a guest for the first time, whether you're here in the room or watching online, welcome home. We want you to know that as we gather and open God's word together each week during the message, we believe that the Spirit of God can work through the word of God to change our lives. To make us more like Jesus. And we're going to seek to do that right now as we turn our attention to Colossians. Think about what's happening as we come to this text. Paul has been writing about the greatness of Christ. He's highlighted His greatness in creation and now he's turning his attention to his role in the new creation. And what we're going to find this morning is that Paul is going to unpack for us how Jesus and the world relate. And how that all comes together through the reconciliation that God brings about in Christ. So I want you to notice with me the way that this text begins in verse 19 when Paul says this.

*<sup>19</sup>For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, <sup>20</sup>and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross.*

You know, sometimes the right directions may end up taking you to the wrong location. That's what happened to my friend, David. He's a pastor up in Kentucky and he was ready for a vacation. Had a friend that was happy to send him down to Alabama and said, "Hey, come stay at our family's lake house. You can spend the week down there." And he gave him specific instructions on how to find it. Turn on to this particular road and to look for the white mailbox and to turn in at the white mailbox. And he did that and he came up to the porch and he found the key under the mat just like his friend had told him. So he let himself into the house and he moved all his stuff in there to spend the week. He set all his clothes and all his belongings up. He got familiar with the house and he'd had a long travel day. He was ready to just unwind for a bit. He noticed that they had a hot tub so he jumped in. And while he was sitting there in the hot tub, he began to look around and he noticed some things were unusual. See these friends of him are hard core Crimson Tide fans. And yet when he looked around there was a lot of Auburn stuff

around. And then he began to look at the pictures that were hanging on the wall and that were around there. And he noticed he didn't recognize any of the people that were in them. And it dawned on him in that moment that he must be in the wrong house. He followed the right directions, but ended up in the wrong spot. He got out of the tub quickly, the hot tub quickly, he frantically searched around to see if he could confirm that this was the right address or not. But he couldn't find anything that gave the address of the house in the house. So he hops in his car and he drives back on this long driveway back to the roadway because he knows the mailbox probably has the address on it. And when he gets back there, he discovers it's the wrong house. So now he races back inside. You can imagine how fevered he was at the moment. He gathers up all his stuff, loads it as quickly as he can, and he gets out of there to try to get away before anybody were to come home.

Now imagine with me for a minute; you're the owners of that house. Maybe you've taken your wife out on a nice date. You've enjoyed an evening out. You're coming back at the end of the day, you walk in the front door, and what do you find? A man in your hot tub. His stuff all over as if he's taken up residence there; as if he belongs there. How do you think he'd feel about that in the moment? You wouldn't be pleased to find him dwelling there. That wouldn't be the spot for him. And yet, when we come to Colossians 1 this morning, we see Paul giving us a different picture. Not one in which the fullness of God is resistant to dwelling in Jesus, but that is pleased to dwell in Jesus. He is speaking about the supremacy of Christ. His greatness as exemplified in the fact that He is the second person of the Trinity; that He Himself is fully God. And I want you to think about what's happening in this moment. As Paul writes to us he's finishing this Christ-centered hymn and he's focusing his attention now on the reconciling work of Christ. How he brings all things together. He restores them through the cross and in this text, what we're going to find is that Paul unpacks two dimensions of how Jesus relates to the world in a way that should reshape how we carry out the Christian life as we await the restoration of all things in the new creation. And notice with me the first one you're going to find here in verse 19. Paul shows us how Jesus represents God to the world. Jesus represents God to the world. So notice how he says it.

<sup>19</sup>For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.

If you remember, last week as we worked our way through verse 18, the end of that verse talked about how Christ might be preeminent in everything. And it gave us some reasons why that would be true. And as we pick up in verse 19, what Paul is going to do is offer some additional reasons why it is that Christ is supreme. And you'll notice how he begins there. He tells us that Jesus is the fullness of God. He is worthy of preeminence because He Himself is God. He speaks there of that idea of fullness. What does he have in mind? It's this picture of completeness, of totality. In other words, everything that it means to be God is true of Jesus. But we're going to find later on in Colossians 2 in verse 9 is Paul will talk about how all the fullness of God dwells in Jesus bodily. The totality of the fullness of God is there, to put it simply, all of God is in all of Him. That's the picture that Paul is driving at when he speaks there of being fully God. And why would he be writing this to the Colossians? We know, as we'll learn later on in this book, that false teachers had come up in the church, were leading people astray, questioning the supremacy of Christ, calling into question whether or not He was worthy of praise. And what Paul is reminding them of here is that He is fully God. That the fullness of

God dwells in Him. That that affirms that He is more than enough. He is worthy of preeminence.

As I've been thinking about it, we're coming up on Halloween in just about a week and a half or two. Halloween maybe the only year of 2020 where during this COVID season things feel normal. Because on Halloween, a lot of people where masks and were stuck wearing them every day. It might feel like we're fitting right in. It's just another normal day. But beyond that, things feel different than they should be. We know what it's like when we go to Kyle Field and have 25% capacity. Or we show up here on Sunday mornings and we're wearing masks and we're not hugging and shaking hands the way that we typically would. Or when we gather next week on, for our Fall Festival and we've got to introduce some additional sanitation and safety practices to make sure we can host our community to do that. In these moments, we're experiencing frustration because we don't get to enjoy things in all their fullness. But when Paul speaks here of Jesus, he tells us that all the fullness of God dwells in Him. That everything that's true to be God is now a reality for Him. And notice the way he says it. He says, all the fullness. He couldn't be more emphatic. He is reinforcing this reality; both the presence and the power of God are in Jesus. He is that one mediator between God and man. He is fully God in a way that displays His preeminence in all the universe and in our lives. But notice also the way that Jesus represents God to the world in another dimension. In the second part of this verse we find that Jesus is not just the fullness of God, but also that He is the temple of God. Do you see how it says it there? That the fullness of God, notice, it was pleased to dwell. That idea of dwelling, to take up residence, to lay down roots, to move into somewhere, to settle down. It's like when we welcome a bunch of new freshmen into the freshman class at A&M this semester and they move into that dorm room or that apartment. They get it all set up in a way where it's reflective, that they're now settled there. They've taken up residence. They're dwelling there. It says that the fullness of God was pleased to dwell in Christ.

We don't want to miss the way that the Bible talks about this idea of dwelling from Genesis to Revelation. Because the entire story of Scripture is giving us a picture of what it looks like to experience the presence of God. This back with me all the way back to the Garden of Eden. Remember Adam and Eve walk in the garden with God in the cool of the day. They experience His presence. But sin fractures the world, it separates us from God, it removes us from His presence through the corruption that comes from the curse of sin. And yet even in the midst of that broken world, we find these glimpses of the presence of God at work in the people of God. So think when they're heading out of Egypt, God leads them by a pillar of cloud by day and a fire by night. Or they come into the wilderness and He calls them to set up this tabernacle, this mobile dwelling place for the presence of God that can be there at every stage of their travels. And it's all a precursor, a forerunner to the temple that's built in the promised land. Where the presence of God dwells amongst His people. And the holy of holies, that inner sanctum of the temple, and what we know is that that temple imagery progresses all the way through to the promise of a new creation in the book of Revelation. Where there is coming a day where the people of God will spend eternity in the presence of God. We will be with Him. We will be connected to Him. But this imagery of the temple, this concept that's all the way through the Scripture signaling the presence of God, comes to its ultimate culmination, Paul tells us this morning, in Jesus Himself. Think about what happens at the cross when Jesus dies. One of the effects of that death, as the text tells us, that in the temple, the veil is torn in two. That divider that separates humanity from the presence of God has now been separated. The dividing wall

has been broken down. The Holy of Holies has not been set free so that the presence of God can be experienced in the fullness that God intended in Christ. And when Paul speaks here of the way that the fullness of God is pleased to dwell in Jesus, he is showing us that He is the true and lasting temple of God. The place where the presence of God dwells in its fullness. But if you notice when you look back at the text, the fullness of God isn't just willing to dwell in Jesus, it is pleased to dwell in Jesus. Do you see that word, pleased? It's the same word that if you were to look back at Jesus' baptism in Matthew chapter 3 in verse 17. When He comes up out of the waters, the Father declares about Him, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." It's the same word. It's the same idea that is there. Now for you men that are married in the room, there are times where you might take some, have some high risk moments as a husband in a marriage. And I can think of one of those in Cami and I's marriage back about seven years ago. We were moving down from Louisville to Nashville. We'd gone house hunting. We looked around, checked everything out, we just didn't find one that was just right for us. So we went back empty handed. Well, I had to come back not long after that for some work related things. And while I was down there, there was some additional houses that we wanted to check out. The realtor and I walk into one of them and we both think, "This is it. This is the one." The only problem is, Cami's not there to see it herself. And so we FaceTime her in, we show her around the house, and here's the high risk moment, guys. We bought that house in Nashville without her having ever stepped foot in it. And I thought to myself, "This is either going to go really good or really bad. Either she's going to be willing to dwell in it because she's got no other choice, we've already bought it. Or I hope she's going to end up being pleased to dwell in it because even though she wasn't there in the moment, it was exactly what she was looking for. Well I'm glad to report she was pleased to live in that house. But I did notice when we moved down here, she made sure she was always with me when we looked at houses down here. This idea of being pleased to dwell, there's no uncertainty here. There's no debate or dilemma about whether or not the fullness of God is pleased to dwell in Jesus. There is this image of total satisfaction.

And here's what we need to remember this morning. If the fullness of God dwells in Christ, and the Spirit of God dwells in us, then that has tremendous implications for how we walk through the Christian life. It changes the way we live because one of the pictures of the presence of God in the Old Testament was not just His presence in the temple. But also His presence on the battlefield. So think back to the conquest of the promised land. When Israel goes out to defeat their enemies, who goes before the army of the people of God? It's the Ark of the Covenant. This place, this seat, where the Spirit of God dwells with His people, the presence of God leads the people of God in the battle of God against the enemies of God and achieves the victory of God. That's the pattern. That's the picture. And the good news this morning for you and me as we seek to fight against sin in our lives is that same reality is true. The fullness of God is in Christ. The Spirit of Christ is in us. His presence is with us and for us enabling us to fight the good fight of the faith resisting temptation. Standing against the accusations and shame of the enemy and calling us to walk in a way that reflects the how God relates to the world in Jesus.

But notice with me as the text goes on. We see a second dimension of how Jesus and the world relate whenever Paul tells us in verse 20 that Jesus reconciles the world to God. So he doesn't just talk about how Jesus represents God to the world, but how Jesus reconciles the world to God. And notice the way he says it there.

<sup>20</sup>and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross.

So notice the way Paul talks about it here. He speaks about how God reconciles the world to Himself through the work of the His Son. He uses this language of reconciliation. You find that throughout the New Testament. And what does Paul have in mind when he uses this word reconcile? Reconciliation is when hostility gives way to humility in such a way that foes become family. There's a reconnection, a restoration, a reconciliation that occurs. And as a matter of fact, if you looked at the original language, the word that Paul uses here for reconcile is not the normal word that he uses. It has an additional portion on the front end of it to add even greater emphasis, more intensity, on the completeness and totality of the reconciliation that God carries out with all things in Christ. So that should raise for us the question then, what does it mean for Christ to reconcile all things? Well just as Christ created all things, Paul's reminding us that now in Christ God is reconciling all things. And perhaps the best way to understand it is through the lens of restoration. He brings order out of chaos. He brings restoration out of brokenness. In verse 20 here, Paul is talking about the public effects of the gospel of Christ. The way it doesn't just affect us personally, we'll see that next week, but the way this reconciliation has a public impact on the entire world around us. It affects all things. So then the questions that should naturally raise for us is, "Wait a minute. Does this mean that Paul is saying to us this morning that everyone in the world will be saved?" When he says, God will reconcile all things in Christ, does that give us some sort of signal of universal salvation? Well this is a conversation that the church has been having from its very beginning. And even back in the early church, there were those that believed from verses like this and others that; yes, indeed. It doesn't matter who you were. That everyone would be saved. And if you look around our culture today, in a culture filled with relativism, people will tell you that all paths lead to the same god. It doesn't matter who you are and how you get there, we're all heading toward the same destination. But is that really what Paul is saying here? When he says that Christ reconciles all things to Himself. Is he saying that all of us will be saved regardless of what we do with Jesus? Well we know that's not the case from throughout the Scripture. But in particular in Colossians 3:6, just a couple of chapters later, we're going to find the way that Paul speaks about how the wrath of God is coming in judgment over sin. And we know Colossians 2:15 tells us about how Jesus will crush His enemies and destroy them. There's no salvation for His enemies. There's no salvation for those that are resistant to the gospel of Christ. So what does he mean then when he talks about reconciling all things to himself?

In my grandfather's class in 1950 here at A&M, he fought in World War 2 in the Coast Guard and then enrolled in school right after that here at A&M. While he was a student, back in 1947, the Paris Peace Treaties were signed formally ending World War 2. We know that the battles that ended a while before that, but the final reconciliation occurred at that moment. Where the terms of surrender were laid out. And as close as can be possible in a broken world, that was the point at which the battle ended; that peace was found, that restoration had occurred. Now that didn't mean there was no more hostility. That didn't mean there was any, no more skirmishes. But what it meant is that the victory was secure. It was no longer in doubt. That there had been a restoration of peace and order. And when Paul speaks here about in Christ God is reconciling all things to Himself, that's the image he's giving us. That there is a restoration, that there is a security in the victory of Christ and that that transforms the world around us. So that what God is doing in reconciling all things is He's either inviting us to experience that reconciliation

through faithful surrender, or later on if we refuse, enforced submission. But all things will experience what it looks like to be made right in the sight of God. In fact, Paul is so exact about that reality that he speaks there of all things, if you look back at the text, whether in earth or in heaven, both seen and unseen, visible and invisible. There is nothing that is not affected by the restoration that God accomplishes in Jesus. And I want you to see something. If you'll hold your finger here, but slide with me to the book of Romans, chapter 8. Because Paul is going to talk about the way that this restoration affects the world in even clearer terms right here in Romans 8. Remember what's happening in Romans 8. Paul is speaking about our adoption as sons and daughters of God. That in the gospel, we are brought into the family. That we experience the glories of salvation in Jesus. But beginning in verse 19, here's what you're going to notice. Is that Paul speaks of the way that the salvation that comes in Christ doesn't just affect us personally, but affects the entire world publicly. Notice how he says it there. Verse 19.

<sup>19</sup>For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. <sup>20</sup>For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup>that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

So what's Paul saying here? He's telling us in this text that all of creation has experienced the effects of the fall. The curse of sin has broken the entire universe. And all of it, just like you and me, is in need of restoration. And what he's telling us here is that our redemption achieves the world's restoration. That all of these things are coming together in the work of Christ. He is not only making us new, but the entire world new. He is bringing about all these things in Christ. See, Paul is showing us of the way that Jesus reconciles the world to God. But how does He do that? Notice the second part of this verse where we see that Jesus reconciles the world through the blood of His cross. So you see how Paul says it there? Verse 20 of chapter 1 of Colossians. Making peace by the blood of His cross. Now this word, making peace, this is the only time it's used in the entire New Testament. And it's giving us this picture of rescue, of freedom, of victory, of peace. And this will be a familiar idea to the Jewish people of this time period who had been waiting hundreds and hundreds of years to see the peace of God occur. The people of God were waiting for the deliverance of God. They were waiting to experience that peace. They were waiting to be set free and they were longing for a Messiah who would come and defeat the enemies of God and usher in that peace of God. And what Paul is reminding us of is that in the gospel of Christ, that peace is now here. That you and I can experience that peace because God has made peace through the blood of His Son.

Now how does that work? How does the blood of the cross make peace for you and for me? Well Paul is picking up on the imagery of the Old Testament sacrificial system. And you remember how it works. That the people of God would be called to make sacrifices, to make payment for their sin. They would slaughter those animals in hopes that the blood would lead to forgiveness. As the author of Hebrews tells us, without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin. But what we find is that the blood of bulls and goats is not enough. Their shed blood is not sufficient to make a lasting payment for you and for me. But what Paul is declaring to us this morning, is that Jesus is reconciling the world to God through the blood of His cross. He is making peace for us even in the midst of the uncertainty of this world when so often we don't feel lasting peace. I'm sure some of you feel that uncertainty this morning. That lack of peace. In fact, I had breakfast with a college student this week who was telling me about

how he had just been offered his dream job. He's in his last year of school at A&M. He's been working towards this goal. There was one company that he wanted to get hired by and he's been so anxious through this entire search process hoping that this would be the job that God gives him; and he got it. And yet he got it and just a couple days later, he woke up in the middle of the night still in panic, still uncertain, still without peace. And the reason for that is because lasting peace can never be found in our circumstances, but only in Christ. Think about with me for a minute. When we fast forward to Halloween here in a couple days. Imagine in your home, you've got an older child and a younger child. They bring back an avalanche of candy. And while the younger child is off somewhere else, he leaves his candy unprotected like a rookie and the older, the older child comes in and takes some of his best pieces. And at that moment as the older child's eating it, the younger child comes in and sees it. You can imagine the tension, the separation, the conflict, the drama that would occur in the house. And there's all sorts of ways that that might resolve itself. There might be a fight that breaks out, an argument that occurs. Or maybe you as a loving parent pull that older child aside and walk them through why that was wrong and coach them through how it is that they need to go and make it right. But, you know, I can think of one scenario that probably isn't going to happen in any of our homes. Imagine with me that in that moment, after that younger child has been wronged, after what's theirs has been taken from them and used in a way that was not pleasing to them. Imagine with me that they go to that older brother and they say, "Hey, I saw what you did. And you and I both know it was wrong. But I'm coming to you to try to make things right. And, in fact, this is how committed I am to making things right with you. I want you to not only have my best candy that you have already taken, I want you to have all the candy I have. I give it to you as this free gift." I know that's not happening in my home. Is that happening in yours? No. Why? Because the one that offended is the one who should be initiating the reconciliation. Not the one who's been wronged. They're not normally the one that comes to seek to make things right. And the one that has been taken from shouldn't have to sacrifice more of themselves in order to bring things back together. But that's what Paul is telling us is exactly what happened through the cross of Jesus Christ. That God has been wronged by each one of us; you and me. We have failed Him in our sin. It is worthy of judgment. It is us that should be going to Him in order to seek to make things right. But that's not what happens. That's not the message of the gospel. The message of the gospel is that God receives the wrong that we have done to Him and rather than hold us in judgment, He sends His best, His Son, to take our place, to die on the cross so that we might experience freedom. That we might experience peace. That we might experience reconciliation and restoration through the blood of His cross.

I can't help but wonder this morning, have you experienced that peace? Do you know what it's like to be set free from the cares of this world? You know, I told you about my friend, David. He packed up things as quickly as he could. He got away from that house as fast as possible and he ended up finding the right house. It was just a little bit more down the road. And as he got settled in, it was fairly late that night. He got his stuff all unpacked for a second time and he was going to get ready for bed and he needs to take his normal nightly medicine and he goes to pull his medicine out of his stuff and guess what. It wasn't there. This is his prescription medicine that has his full name and address on it. And it's sitting at the other people's house. The one he had unknowingly broken into. So put yourself in his shoes. What would you do in that moment? Would you just leave it behind and say, "Well, I'll take my chances, hopefully nothing bad happens." Or maybe on the other end of the spectrum, do you call the police and say, "Hey, I just broke into a house, but I left some of my stuff there. Can y'all help me go back and get the

stuff that I left behind whenever I broke in?” Or do you do what he did and you break into it a second time? So he goes back down to that house. He kind of cases the joint. He’s trying to see if there’s anybody in there or what’s going on. He pulls in, he hightails it under that mat, he grabs the key, and he goes into that house, he grabs his stuff, and gets out of there as quickly as possible. Now imagine if you’re him in that moment. Now you know you shouldn’t be there. You know you don’t belong. You know this is not your residence. You know that you’re not qualified to be there. You can sense that fear; that lack of peace, that uncertainty, that anxiety that would grip him in the moment. And what Paul is reminding us of here this morning, is that same reality is true for you and me apart from Jesus. That nagging restlessness, that anxious uncertainty about the future, that constant concern about whether you’re doing enough to make it to heaven. Is a reminder to us that we can’t do it on our own. That we can’t rely on ourselves to will our way into the kingdom. We have no standing to dwell in that house. If we try to enter into it on our own, God will not be pleased with us. But the beauty of the gospel is that God has made a way for us in Jesus. He is reconciling the world to himself. He is restoring us into fellowship with Him. And the call of the gospel to each one of us this morning is to enjoy the fullness of God in Christ by experiencing the peace of God that can only be found through Christ.

Let’s pray together.

Father, we’re coming to You as sinners and I can’t help but wonder if there are people that are here this morning not really sure why they came who have been running from You. Who are wrestling with emptiness. Who are wrestling with anxiety. And I pray that if there are those that are here watching online who feel empty, that this morning for the first time they would experience Your fullness in Christ. And if there are those that are feeling wrestles and anxious that for the first time they would experience the peace of God that surpasses understanding, that guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. And I’m praying for our church in this season, God, that even as we await the restoration of all things, that even now, You can use us to give glimpses of that reconciliation today in the way we love one another, in the way we serve our community, in the way that we care for the least of these, in the way that we value every person that’s made in the image of God. Help us to be faithful to that ministry of reconciliation You’ve called us to. We ask these things in Jesus name. Amen.