



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Sunday, July 17-23 (C) – Colossians 1:15-28

Focus: *Now Reconciled*

word of life

“...and through [Christ] God was pleased to reconcile to [God] all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross. And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death ...”
(Colossians 1:20-22a NRSV)

Read Colossians 1:15-28

Colossians 1:15-20 is a beautiful hymn from the early church which uses soaring language to describe Christ as the image of the invisible God as well as the one who existed before all of creation and holds all of creation together. The imagery in the hymn moves from creation to the church, depicting Christ as the head of the church and the one in whom the fullness of God lives. (See Colossians 1:19.)

God reconciles with humanity in Jesus Christ and brings peace through the cross. Take a moment to read Colossians 1:15-20. Imagine these words as a hymn being sung by Christians in the early church.

1. *What phrases from the hymn are worth noting?*
2. *What (if anything) in this passage offers a new description of Christ?*

This majestic hymn about the pre-eminence of Christ found in Colossians 1:15-20 is repeated in the lectionary assigned for Christ the King Sunday (Year C) and will be explored in depth in the *Daily Faith Practice* for that Sunday, but the detailed description of Christ does set the stage for the next section of the letter. Things quickly shift from the lofty references describing Christ to an accusative “you” and “your” actions. “And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death...” (Colossians 1:21-22 NRSV)

God does not need to be reconciled to us, but we need to be reconciled to God. Because we are estranged from God, we do things not pleasing to the One who brought us into being. We insist on living independently from God. The people in the church of Colossae (and all of us who are humans) are described as being “hostile in mind, doing evil deeds” on this earth. (Colossians 1:21 NRSV)

3. *What does it mean to be estranged from God?*
4. *What are examples of being hostile in mind and doing evil deeds?*
5. *How might it please God to be reconciled to humanity?*

The hope is to present people as “holy and blameless and irreproachable” before God. This can happen only by God’s intervention through Christ who is offered as a holy and blameless lamb sacrificed on our behalf, but that is not the end. Instead, our response is to be one of steadfast faithfulness.

6. *When and how are we “holy and blameless and irreproachable”?*

This brief passage begins with a hymn praising Christ the firstborn of creation, followed by a laser-precise description of our estranged relationship with God and reconciliation in Christ. Then, the passage shifts as the writer describes his own commissioning to make God’s word known and his suffering for the sake of the church, concluding with a call to lead Christians to maturity in faith. Much about the mystery of God is shared in this brief passage.

7. *Summarize important insights from this passage.*

Word among us

Pastors, organists, and music directors work diligently behind the scenes to select the appropriate congregational hymns and special music which will enhance worship. Music used in worship can reinforce the primary point of a sermon, as well as console, inspire, and equip worshippers to go out into the world to serve and love. Music combined with lyrics can illustrate and illuminate the mystery of God.

1. *Share a memory when music has deepened your faith.*
2. *What is it about music that stirs deep emotions?*

The hymn found in Colossians 1:15-20 beautifully describes the mystery of Christ in all of his glory. “For in [Christ] all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.” (Colossians 1:19 NRSV) What a beautiful phrase to describe the oneness of God in Christ as well as its harmony.

3. *Which hymn(s) sums up the Christian faith for you?*

But the hymn abruptly ends as the writer directly articulates the human condition. “And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds...” (Colossians 1:21 NRSV) It’s hard not to wonder what the Colossians did to spark such an outrage, but that is not the intended focus. This passage is not about the Colossians, but about God reconciling the world in Jesus Christ.

God extends reconciliation to the Colossians (and to all of us) despite evil deeds. Ordinary people are part of the extraordinary salvation story of God in Christ. The good news of God’s extension of grace to the Colossians, despite their shortcomings, means there is hope for us as well.

4. *When do you feel estranged from God?*
5. *How does it feel to be reconciled with God?*

faith practice in daily life

Live among God’s faithful people

When we read the letter written to the Colossians in the first century, it is important to remember *they* are described as being “once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds” and also as being reconciled with God through Christ. But what will the Colossians do with the grace extended to them? What will *we* do with the grace extended to us in Christ?

The Colossians—like us—are encouraged to not just receive the gift of reconciliation, but to mature in Christ and be ready to be presented to God as holy, blameless and irreproachable. This maturation of faith occurs as we live among God’s faithful people. As we mature in Christ, we encourage others to do likewise.

6. *Imagine what it will be like to be presented to God—as one already reconciled?*
7. *What can you do this week to remind yourself of God’s actions in Christ?*
8. *Whom might you encourage this week to grow in Christ?*

Prayer

Creator of all, create in us hearts pleasing to you. Amen

last word

Pay attention to times when you feel estranged from God and pause for prayer.

Daily Faith Practices

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