

²¹ At one time, you were alienated from God and hostile in your thinking as expressed through your evil deeds. ²² But now Christ reconciled you in his body of flesh through death, in order to present you holy, blameless, and faultless before him— ²³ if you continue steadfast and firm in faith, without being moved away from the hope of the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a minister.

²⁴ Now I rejoice in my sufferings on your behalf, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the church. ²⁵ I became a minister of the church for your benefit when God gave me the task of fully proclaiming the word of God, ²⁶ namely, the mystery that was hidden for past ages and generations, but now has been revealed to his saints. ²⁷ God wanted to make known to them what is the wealth of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles—this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

²⁸ We proclaim him as we admonish and teach everyone with all wisdom, so that we might present everyone perfect in Christ. ²⁹ This is the goal I am laboring to reach, striving with his strength, which is powerfully at work in me.

Aliens: from Wrecked to Reconciled

This past Fourth of July we watched the classics. We always the 1776 musical and in order to broaden our children's perspective of art, I ordered Independence Day with Will Smith. The one thing the 1776 doesn't have is the one thing Independence Day does: Aliens. And as with all Alien movies, they all have a common theme, they are here to dominate, decimate, and destroy life as we know it. In fact whenever I hear the word "Alien" or as in our scripture reading today. I can't help but think of Ripely in a power loader destroying the queen in order to protect life. Maybe you're not an Aliens fan, maybe War of the Worlds resonates better with you. It doesn't matter.

Because I doubt Paul had aliens in mind when he wrote to the Colossians, "*At one time, you were alienated from God and hostile in your thinking as expressed through your evil deeds.*" He may not have had foreign invaders in mind but he did have those hell bent on domination, destruction, and hostility in mind. That's how Paul describes the Colossians and us at one time.

But that's not how we think of our status before God. We think we're pretty good. Humanism wants us to believe that humans are naturally good people given the right circumstances, but with every shooting, with every act of violence, we only demonstrate how alien and hostile we are. In spite of this Paul is able to write, "What once was a wreck is now reconciled."

We remember from last week that the Colossians were located in the middle of Macedonia. They were part of a tri city area with Laodicea and Hierapolis. What once was a flourishing city has now been bypassed by the Via Ignatia or the Via Sebaste and they're struggling. Not only are they struggling to survive as a city, they are also struggling to survive as a church. The Colossian Heresy

which is a mixture of paganism, Judaism, and Christian influences is pointing people away from the sufficiency of scripture and Jesus, back to higher knowledge, another work, or celebration you must do. Epaphras then travels 1,000 miles to seek Paul's advice.

And Paul responds. After a brief greeting (Colossians 1:1-2), he launches into a run on sentence that stretches from verses 3 to 14. He gets excited to preach Christ crucified, and he starts by proclaiming the sufficiency of scripture. God's Word is enough. It has not only worked among you but it has worked through the entire world. Words are coming faster than the apostle can write, he throws in the Christ Hymn verses 15-20, which proclaims the supremacy of Christ. He is everything. The firstborn from creation (meaning not first created) but the preeminent one. There is no one higher than him, he is the one through whom all things were made, the one who holds everything together. He is the head, far above, thrones, dominions, rulers, and powers. He has the highest rank, and he made peace through the blood of the cross. This is the one that Paul proclaims, the single most important person who ever lived.

But at one time it wasn't so peaceful with God. *"You were alienated from him and hostile in your thinking as expressed through your evil deeds."* Alienated, estranged, like one at war with another. Hostile to God. There wasn't anything good about them. It wasn't anything in them. It wasn't because that they were so lovable that Jesus loved them. They were aliens, foreign invaders, destroying God's perfect creation while blaming God for doing so. They were a wreck.

And in many ways so are we. How often do we get as excited about Christ and him crucified as the apostle? Breathless excitement? Rather the thought may come to mind, "We've heard this before. We already know what God has done for us through his Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Tell us something different." We may even want something more relevant, practical, tell us how to be better people. The first thing the Bible tells us is that we have not been good people. We've been aliens at war with God and destructive to his creation. An alien invasion holds the whole human race captive. Sin: God didn't create sin and yet it infests his world because Adam and Eve disobeyed God. And we sin daily. But we'll make excuses, "No one's perfect." We'll appeal to the majority. Like the Raid on Area 51. God can't condemn us all we console ourselves and feel better about our failures.

But God hates sin. It destroys those he loves. He doesn't say, "Hate the sin, love the sinner." No he condemns the sin and casts the sinner into hell. Sin is not just a moral shortcoming missing the mark, it is an act of evil and downright defiance. It is sin and God hates it, judges it, just as he hates, judges, and condemns the sinner.

Instead of reconciliation and redemption he should have sent in a heavenly team of space marines to do away with the disease that had spread about unchecked. But he sent his son. He sends his word. The bible does serve as a guide for godly living, but before we can begin to say, "Do this... Don't do that," we need a proper attitude of "this is something that I want to do, that I

love to do.” But we dare not move from the most exciting thing to ever happen and focus on our work for God.

The temptation is to jump from Good Samaritan Sunday and say, “We should all be more like the Good Samaritan... and get busy” And that’s true but then to rush off like Martha and immediately get to working.” But in our sinful selfishness we’ll see someone who isn’t doing enough and in our hostility, with family even, we’ll accuse Jesus of not helping. Jesus humbles and then he helps. “*One thing is needful.*” It isn’t you or what you can do. It’s Jesus and far better than serving is taking the opportunity to be served by Jesus. So we better rush around and do as much as we can as fast as we can NO! The faith is not about our doing, but about what God has done. That’s something to get excited over.

Because while your hostility towards God was expressed through your evil deeds *Christ reconciled you in his body through death, in order to present you holy, blameless, and faultless before him.* This word refers to the married couples who come back together after separation and yet the problem which caused the separation is entirely our own. God reconciled the world to himself not counting sins against him. God is not reconciled, nor does he reconcile himself to the world, we are reconciled to God. From an alien wreck to reconciled. Jesus came with an alien righteousness. Alien because it was not our own. Alien because it comes from outside of us. It’s foreign to us. This alien righteousness is even greater than anything HG Wells could ever have imagined, more powerful than sin, and it overcomes hostility.

Not through domination, decimation, and destruction. Paul’s words concerning the supremacy of Christ already have told us that he is the creator of all things and the one through whom all things are held together. Jesus is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He doesn’t need to conquer this world. He created it and already has dominion.

His invasion is one of righteousness that comes through his death in the flesh. He gave us his perfect life, his righteous life, the life God expects of his creation and he gives it to us. We call this the “alien righteousness,” because it is foreign to us. It is a mystery as Paul says, “*kept hidden from past ages and generations, but now has been revealed to his saints.*” That doesn’t mean God had no plan for saving those born before Jesus came into this world. They only didn’t know how God would accomplish it. They didn’t know the full details that we do today. But they are saved in the same way we are: through faith in the promise. They looked forward to the seed of woman who would come to crush the serpents head, and we look back at the one who has come to destroy the devils work.

And he is still at work. Infecting or rather cleansing those infected with sin and death, bringing them into the kingdom of God and giving them life now. He has already made you holy and blameless, above reproach. You are washed in the waters of baptism and pointed back to the one thing needful. You are again guided back to the one thing needful in Lord’s Supper where Jesus again gives us his flesh for the forgiveness of sins. Here in his word you are made holy. He has

taken away your guilt and shame. You have God's favor. He has revealed the great mystery of an alien invasion of righteousness for you.

Will the Colossians remain firm in the faith holding on to the truth or will they sell out for a false hope found in human wisdom? A better question is, "Will we?" We don't know what the world has in store for us, maybe there will be aliens and a raid on Area 51 September 20th, tell your friends, (No, not that) but we do know who holds us in his hands and that is something to be excited about. Tell your friends about that instead, the hope you have. The hope Paul has. That hope comes through the ongoing work of the word, which provides the power to remain firm in the faith and not shift from it, that we may continue reconciled with God.

Even as Paul is under house arrest in Rome he can write comfortably rejoicing in his sufferings, steadfast in his faith, unmoved because of the hope of the Gospel. Heaven has invaded earth. God has reconciled the world to himself. He reconciled you once alienated and hostile are now blameless and above reproach. So even if you aren't cultured and your stuck watching 1776 you have a Savior who serves and saves. He is the one thing needful that takes what was wrecked and reconciles us to God. To him be the glory. Amen.