

Lord of Reconciliation

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[0 : 00] Anyways, we are continuing on in our series in Colossians, and it's been great so far, right? And it's last week, if you remember, if you were listening last week, we talked about how Jesus, and it talked about him being preeminent, him being above and different to anything else, anyone else, anybody, any human, anything like that.

And talked about this idea of him being the greatest of all time. And we looked into reasons why. And today, we're going to look at more reasons why. We're going to be in Colossians 1, chapter 1, verses 19.

We're going to start there. And so if you're old school and you've got your Bible with you, you can turn there. If you've got the Bible on your phone, you can get there. And otherwise, we will have verses up to read along with me, okay?

So we're going to jump into it. Verse 19, it says this. For in him, Jesus, in Jesus, all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. And through him to reconcile himself to all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of the cross, the blood of his cross.

And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 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.

[1 : 17] If indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

So we're looking at this thing. We're looking at how Jesus is so much better, so much greater and worthy of all our worship, all of our surrender, everything, all of our life that we give to him.

And this passage, it's talking about a specific thing he's done, and it's his ministry of reconciliation, what he did, right? And we love this idea of reconciliation. If we're people, the idea of reconciliation, man, it's at the heart of what we want.

It's like that fairytale perfect ending that we desire. Man, people that were at odds being brought together, them living happily ever after, right? It's that thing of, man, Miss America finally gets her wish for world peace.

That's what we like to think about with reconciliation. And I think what we would all agree is that, man, it would be great. Wouldn't it be great if we could live in harmony with each other all the time?

[2 : 20] No fights, no quarreling, nothing like that. Wouldn't that be amazing? Deep down, that's really what we want. Nobody wakes up every day thinking like, you know what? I wish everybody would just hate me today, you know?

I wish I could just go around and get in a fight with everybody I run into. Nobody saw, I mean, you got to be like crazy to think that way, right? We all want to live in harmony. But here's the reality, guys. If history has taught us anything, if you're students of history, mankind is unable to achieve that.

Mankind is not able to achieve that. Not that we haven't tried. And there's two big ways that we've tried to achieve peace and harmony and reconciling people together. One is domination and the other is indoctrination.

So there have been these great leaders in history, right? Great leaders, powerful leaders, trying to unify their known world through domination. Think Alexander the Great.

Think Genghis Khan, right? Their pathway to peace was through bloodshed and oppressive control. You better get on my side. You better surrender to me, all of you who are my enemies, or you're going to die, right?

[3 : 25] Either fall in line or you're going to die. And we've also tried this through indoctrination. Think enlightenment. The enlightenment promised us, man, if we just start pursuing science, if we just start pursuing philosophy, then we would bring about peace as a human race.

It sought the pathway to peace through. We just need more education, more knowledge, more understanding of things. While we reject religion, we reject truth from outside of us and say, no, we are the answer.

Truth actually comes from within us. That's what the enlightenment was propagating, that belief. We just needed to believe in ourselves and cultivate the good that really existed in us.

We just needed to tap into that as people. And mankind, we thought, had this ability to unlock, therefore, this utopian future. We could achieve peace and harmony and reconciliation.

And what did we get after a few centuries of that dominating doctrine? Well, two world wars, a cold war, mass genocides, as men tried to bring about their vision of a utopian future.

[4 : 36] And again, like, man, it was this idea that we could all do it together, but in the end, it ended up just like the same thing. Domination, your enemies, your opponents that disagreed with you, that didn't believe in that, you know what you're going to do?

You're going to say, you better get on board and you better surrender to this idea or you are going to die. We are going to mistreat you. We're going to oppress you. We're going to control you. And if you think about that today, even in the U.S. today, man, we're more divided than ever.

We can't say we're a harmonious nation, right? The tone and the temper of politics seems to just be growing hotter and hotter. So let's ask the question, why is that?

Why is that a problem? Why is that this continual problem? Why can't we solve it as human beings? Is it not possible to bring about reconciliation and peace without bloodshed?

And actually, this passage points to the answer. See, throughout history, mankind has sought peace through death or domination of its enemies. Peace through fear, peace through control, peace through oppression.

[5 : 37] And it never seems to work. And Jesus, however, has achieved the greatest peace, the greatest hope of reconciliation, the reality of reconciliation. And here's the difference, guys.

It's not through his enemies dying, but him dying for his enemies. 1 Colossians 1, verse 19. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.

And through him, Jesus, to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by what? The blood of the cross.

Jesus died to make a way for us to be with him. Now, that's the Sunday school answer that if you've been Christian for any moment of time, you're supposed to say yes and amen to, right?

That's good. But maybe you're here. Maybe you're here and you don't believe this. You need more convincing. You might be thinking, man, is this really necessary? All this shedding of blood.

[6 : 36] Jesus shedding his blood. Is this really necessary? And I want to say, man, that is a fair question. See, on the surface, when we first get into this, we could look and say, man, Jesus' sacrifice, the cross, really just seems over the top.

But is it really? See, let's consider the cost of relational separation. Separation, I would argue, is a bloody business.

Now, maybe not literally, but definitely figuratively. Even the modern poets of our day, the pop songwriters, they know the costliness of this, the costliness of disharmony and discord in relationship.

Here are selections of lyrics from John Mayer's Heartbreak Warfare. He wrote this song in 2009. It says this, lightning striking inside my chest to keep me up at night. I dream of ways to make you understand my pain.

You drop his name, you push it in and twist the knife again. Watch my face and pretend to feel no pain. Clouds of sulfur in the air, bombs are falling everywhere.

[7 : 37] It's heartbreak warfare. Once you want it to begin, no one really ever wins. So we see this guy riding out of the depths of his experience the pain and the suffering and the turmoil that happens through relational separation and discord and disharmony.

And we would all agree with that. Relational separation is a bloody business. We feel real emotional and mental anguish in those moments, not to mention what we don't even realize is happening to us, some of the deep soul wounds that only God can heal.

So if relational separation is a bloody mess, doesn't it stand that reconciliation should be as well? See, when you consider the problem, when you consider the solution, all of a sudden doesn't really sound that over the top.

And God agrees with us. And he's saying, he's like screaming at us here. The problem isn't that God is overplaying the problem. The problem is, is that we downplay it. See, we can't understand and we will never understand the severity of separation until we consider and look at the costliness of the reconciliation.

See, without the cross, what I'm saying here is without looking at the cross, without seeing it and believing it, we can't understand the severity of our sin that causes the separation from us and God and us with each other.

[9 : 01] See, without the cross, what we're going to do is what we're going to do is minimize our sin. We're really good at that. Really good at minimizing our sin and the guilt that causes separation from God. We're going to say things like, man, you know what?

I'm really not that bad of a person. I'm not really that bad of a guy or a gal. When we might even compare ourselves to other people, well, at least I'm not him. At least I'm not her. I don't do what they do.

That reminds me of a moment in the life of Jesus. Luke 7, verses 36, if you want to turn there. So Jesus is hanging out with a Pharisee who asked him to eat with him, right?

So one of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him. So he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at table. And behold, a woman of the city who was a sinner. She was a known sinner.

Like you weren't guessing. Everybody knew who she was and what she was on about. She was a known sinner. When she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster flask of ointment.

[10 : 02] That's a very, very expensive ointment. Very costly. And standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment.

Now when the Pharisees who had invited him saw this, sorry, now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself. So this is the Pharisee. He didn't say this out loud. He's thinking this to himself. Hmm.

If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him. For she is a sinner. And Jesus answering him, I love this, man.

Jesus answered saying to him, now you know it's getting good, right? This is the part. It's like, oh boy, here it comes, right? Simon, I have something to say to you. That could be like a really good thing when Jesus says that.

And sometimes that's like a really like, oh, here it comes. Simon, I have something to say to you. And he answered, say it, teacher. A certain money lender had two debtors. One owed 500 denarii.

[11 : 03] And denarii was like a day wage in that day. So a day's wage. So 500. And the other 50. When they could not pay, he canceled the debt of both. Now, which of them will love him more?

Simon answered, the one I suppose for whom he canceled the larger debt. And he said to him, you have judged rightly. Then turning toward the woman, he said to Simon, do you see this woman?

I entered your house. You gave me no water for my feet. But she has wet my feet with her tears. And wiped them with her hair.

You gave me no kiss. And kiss in those days was like a sign of friendship. It was a sign of acceptance. You gave me no kiss.

But from the time I came in, she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil. But she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven.

[12 : 06] For she loved much. For he who is forgiven little loves little. And he said to her, your sins are forgiven. So what's happening here, right?

What's happening here is the Pharisee saw himself as a good person. He did all the right things. He wasn't a named sinner like this woman in his house. That is to say, his sins weren't public.

They couldn't be seen by others. But make no mistake, he still sinned. But the Pharisee's problem was that he saw himself as a 50 denarii sinner. Really not much to pay off.

Really don't need God's help. They really don't need his salvation. I can work my way out of this, right? While the woman understood her sins as so much more. So while he minimized the reality of his sin, the woman understood the full measure of hers.

And one resulted in pride and placing himself in the seat of judgment, standing back, saying what he was worthy of. And he had very little love.

[13 : 08] Very little love towards Jesus. Very little need. Very little consideration for Jesus. But the other resulted in humility and letting Jesus remain in the seat of judgment.

She had a great love and gratitude for Jesus for he alone could forgive her her sins. Now see, the point is this. No sin that you and I commit is small.

In one sense, it is breaking God's rule, his boundaries, his order. But over and above that, sin violates our relationship with God.

And the next part of Colossians that we get into says this. And you, you and me, you and me, who once were, so he's, okay, before Jesus saved you, you and me, we were once, what?

Alienated and hostile in mind doing evil deeds. We are all sinners that need to be reconciled to God.

[14 : 07] And this is what the Pharisee missed. We are not good people like the Enlightenment would like us to believe. We are not good people intrinsically that need just a little bit of help, a little bit of adjustment.

Before Jesus reconciles us through the cross, what are we? What does it say here? It says we are alienated. We are hostile in mind toward God. And we go about doing evil deeds.

See, we often get hung up on the evil deeds part, right? Just got to stop doing those things, those things that people could see. And yes and amen to that. We should stop doing evil deeds. But even if you happen to be a pretty good person, there is still this mind of hostility toward God.

And maybe that doesn't leak out in evil deeds. But just because it's private doesn't make it less nefarious. See, man looks on the outward. We behold the outward and we make judgments.

But God looks at the heart. And our condition is this. It says we are alienated. And you know what? That word deserves further investigation to really do it justice. That means a lot more than being an outsider.

[15 : 15] It's not like he's referring to this. Man, you were just alienated. You were outside. You were kind of the people outside looking in the windows of Jesus' house. And they're having a good time wondering like, oh, man, I wish I could get in there, you know?

But that's not what's happening there. That word means to belong to another. Okay? It's not like we're just outside, no big deal.

We actually belong to another. It means our affections and our loyalties belong to someone else. Right? Now, who could that other person be that we could belong to besides Jesus?

Who perhaps could that be? Maybe it's just another nice guy. No big deal. Right? No. Actually, it's Jesus' enemy. We belong to that camp. Maybe you're saying, okay, prove it.

Okay, Ephesians 2. Let's jump to there. Ephesians 2, verse 1. It says this. You were, okay, before Jesus saved you, you were dead in trespasses and sins in which you once walked following the course of this world, following who?

[16 : 18] The prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience, among who we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind.

So whether or not you're here in a Christian, man, this is important. I want you to hear this. Whether you believe or you don't believe. Hear this. This is so important. You never move away from this truth.

Without Jesus, this is all you and I can be, what this says here. Without him interrupting and doing something about it, this is all you and I can be.

We belong to the prince of the power of the air, the devil, Satan. We will never be truly free people. We will either be slaves to sin or slaves to righteousness.

The Bible doesn't give us a neutral ground. There isn't some, there is spiritual power at work exerting itself on us all the time, right? There is no such thing as spiritual Sweden. You don't get to stay neutral, all right?

[17 : 24] You're either for or against. That's it. You don't get any in between. You either reconcile to Jesus or what this verse says, you are hostile to him.

You are alienated for him. You are belonging to another. You are on Satan's team. Now, if you're saying, wow, man, that sounds really bad. Well, it is, okay? But you know what?

This bad news makes the good news so good. See, this is who we are. This is who we were before Jesus. But then he saves us and he gives us a total makeover.

And the before and after here is absolutely nuts. It's crazy. This is like way better than the Weight Watchers before and after pictures, right? That's way better than those transformation pictures. Jesus totally changes us.

When Jesus reconciles us to himself, he totally changes us and transforms us. Verse 22, check it out. He says this. He, Jesus, has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death in order to present you what?

[18 : 23] Holy. Blameless. Above reproach before him. Guys, that should blow your mind.

That's like mic drop moment. Let's just walk out. It's so good. Let's unpackage that a little bit more, right? It is so amazing. Before, who we were.

Hostile. Enemy. Practicing evil. Now who we are afterwards, right? The before and afters. Now we're holy. Now we're blameless. Now we're above reproach, right?

Now you might be thinking, what's that above reproach word? Well, basically it means this. You're a beyond accusation, right? Satan's name is accuser. That's who he is. Satan is the accuser and he lives to accuse and condemn God's people.

So now he's saying, now you're above reproach. Now you're above the accusations of Satan. You're beyond guilt. This is a huge change. This is a total transformation.

[19 : 21] Now you think about those things and you think about the idea of transformation. You would say, gosh, man, big transformations like that, that takes a long time, right? You think of the guys that go from like Pune-iverse to Mr. Universe.

It's like, man, those body transformation, they had to diet really strictly. They had to work out hard. That probably took a long time to happen. But with Jesus, what we see here in one sense, it happens instantaneously.

When you surrender to Jesus, when you believe in him, as the Bible says, as your Lord and Savior, you put your faith in him. This is what happens to you. Remember last time, if you were here last week, we baptized Cadence.

And that is what baptism points to. We go from spiritual life to spiritual death, sorry, to spiritual life. It says in Romans 6, we are buried with Christ in his death, putting to death the old man so that we might be raised to walk in newness of life.

Who we were is buried. Who we once were is buried. We are raised as this new creation. The Bible draws this distinction of the old self and the new self. But we receive this transformation passively.

[20 : 33] It is something that God does to us. Theology nerds call this definitive sanctification. We are definitively made holy. We are definitively called blameless.

We are definitively considered above reproach because Jesus reconciled us to himself through his blood. We are united to him, right?

We don't have a righteousness that earned us the salvation. We get Jesus' righteousness considered to us. And guys, let me tell you, his righteousness is always going to be way better than our righteousness.

This is what God's mercy and grace are all about. We don't get what we deserve, which is his mercy toward us. And we get what we don't deserve, which is his grace toward us.

And this thing is received. It's not earned. Jesus earned it for us. We are called simply to believe. And we have to get rooted in that truth, that basic truth right there. There's nothing you and I can do to be more reconciled to Jesus than by what he's done on the cross.

[21 : 32] And now while that is true, it makes the next verse a really confusing contradiction. Because look at what it goes on to say in verse 23. If, condition, right?

If, indeed, you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which is proclaimed in all creation under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

Now, we look at that and we say, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, wait a second here, Jess. There's a whole lot that I have to do here. This is a contradiction. So which is it?

Do I get salvation freely or do I have to earn it? And I would kindly suggest that you might be reading this the wrong way. See, this if doesn't mean you have to earn your transformation.

You already have the status of holy, blameless, above reproach. This if comes out of and flows out of your transformation. It proves your transformation, right? Martin Luther had this cool saying.

[22 : 34] It's like you're saved by faith alone, but it's a faith that doesn't come alone. There's a lot more that comes with that faith. Now, this isn't suggesting that you are earning a righteousness.

You are earning a holiness apart from Christ. You're not earning it through works. What is Paul saying here? What does he say? You continue in the faith. And he says how you continue in the faith.

You are stable. You are steadfast. You are not shifting from the hope of the gospel. So basically, we don't enter into Christianity with the gospel, which is we are reconciled to Jesus through his bloody cross and then just start adding other stuff to it.

This Colossian letter was written at a time when guys were starting to come into the church and saying things like, Jesus, great. You're saved through his bloody cross.

Man, that is awesome. But you know what? There's a little bit more. There's even more. There's a higher plane. There's a higher plan. There's even holier holiness that you can reach.

[23 : 36] And we know about it. And so false teachers were starting to entice believers to shift away from holding fast to the truth of the gospel for other things.

Colossians 2 verse 16 picks up on this. Paul is saying to them, therefore, let no one pass judgment. Let no one stand in the place of judgment and say, you are not worthy.

Let no one disqualify you. On the questions of food or drink or with regard to what festivals you keep or new moon festivals you keep or Sabbaths, whether you keep them or not.

These are the shadow of things to come. But the substance belongs to Christ. They're fulfilled in him. And that's like a totally other sermon that I can't even get into right now.

And let no one disqualify you. Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism. Asceticism is basically the more you suffer, the more righteous you become.

[24 : 38] Okay? Let no one disqualify you based on that or on the worship of angels, right? Which is basically guys were proclaiming like an angel visited me. I have this vision, which it goes on to say.

And like I have this new secret knowledge to make you holy. Says it puffs them up without reason by their sensuous minds. See these little shifts.

It wasn't even big stuff. It was these little shifts from the gospel. Seemingly insignificant. And they were creating these new ways to kind of grow into Christ somehow.

These new secret ways beyond what had been revealed in Jesus Christ and his gospel. And that they created this. They were trying to create this new system like rungs on a ladder.

You have to climb higher. You have to go to the next rung to count. You can stay where you are if you choose. But man, you know what? If you really want to make sure you're saved, you can climb up higher and join us up here and follow what we're saying.

[25 : 39] It's pretending. These guys were saying and communicating. There was an even greater hope. See the hope that was being preached by Paul and the apostles in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Keep this festival. Practice this discipline. Deny your flesh. Chase angels and visions. For what? All for a new and different revelation that maybe hadn't been revealed yet. But the reality is the gospel, the revelation of Jesus is the final word.

Hebrews 1 tells us that. Nothing can add to that. So that is what we hold on to, guys. That is what Paul is telling us to hold on to here and continue in and don't shift from it.

The gospel of Jesus is not only the power that is efficient to save us, it is sufficient to save us. We don't need anything else. But, and this is a very, very important thing, like Paul's if here, we do have to hold on to it.

We can't let it go. We don't add to it. We don't take away from it. That means you and I, we stay in a position where we have to fight. We got to do something. But here's the good news, guys.

[26 : 43] You and I should not have to fight alone. And we don't fight alone, right? We have the gift of the Holy Spirit. It's the part of the grace package God has given to every single one of us who have put our faith in Jesus Christ.

And with him, we practice what, again, the clever theologians call the other side of sanctification, which is active sanctification. Remember, we talked about the passive thing, what God does to us, where we're totally transformed by faith in Jesus.

The other side of that sanctification coin is active sanctification, where the Holy Spirit is leading us and calling to us and say, don't go that way. Go this way. Here's what you should believe about Jesus Christ as you read your scripture, as you understand the word, right?

And so we cooperate with him. We let him lead us and we follow him. But guess what, guys? We put in some effort. That's our job. We put in some elbow grease. But wait, you might say.

Hold on, hold on. I'm a grace guy. That's anti-grace. And I would say to you, no, it's not. Grace isn't against effort in our salvation. It's against earning our salvation, right? Let me say that again.

[27 : 45] Grace isn't against effort. It's just against earning. Now, that's a black and white line you and I need to draw very clearly in our faith. There's no gray area there.

It's effort, yes. Earning, no. And God gives us the power to do this. How? Through his Holy Spirit that he's given to us. He is our strength. He is his empowering presence, right?

And we all get this. And so that means it doesn't matter what your Myers-Briggs type is. It doesn't matter what Enneagram number you are. God gives us all that we need. You, no matter who you are, what education level you are, what age you are in Christ, it doesn't matter.

You have all you need in him. Okay? And this is an amazing gift. My dad's in from out of town, which is awesome to have him here and his family.

It's been amazing. And we were driving the other day. Okay? And he, a few years back, he was recalling just how he had gotten really sick. And there was a couple of times he had a near-death, real near-death experience.

[28 : 43] The doctor was suggesting that he might have been dead in a couple of months. And there was a couple of times he said, man, Jess, there was, I was like right on the edge of going into eternity. He recalled it vividly.

And so I asked him, man, it's like, man, Dad, how was it facing that final moment? How was it facing that moment? Because I often think that for myself, man, it's like that final test of faith. You know, am I going to believe God?

Am I going to think like everything that I believe in, did it just count for nothing? Was it a waste of time? And he said, you know what, Jess? All I experienced was his peace, amazing peace. And he said this thing.

God gives you what you need in the moment. God always gives you what you need. And he's been following God longer than I've been alive. And he could say that with authority.

No matter what he's been through, God gives you and me what we need for that moment. You don't tell the Holy Spirit, I don't need you, I've got this. We don't tell that to God.

[29 : 44] We don't tell him that. No, no, God, you go take a nap. I'm all good here. No way, man. The Holy Spirit, he is God. He is all-powerful. And he is for our success in that we hold on to our faith.

We continue in our faith. And you know what? We say thank you. Thank you, God, for that amazing gift. I'm going to tap into that. Help me. Help me. Fill me, Holy Spirit, today. Empower me to live out this faithfulness.

That is what a wise person would do. Like tapping into it every single day. I want you to think about how even this picture, as the Israelites went through the desert, it's this picture of how we journey from all the way through faith until we reach the promised land, our home in heaven.

God provided for his people by these miraculous ways manna, right? But what did they have to do? They didn't just, God wasn't like, just open your mouth as you're sleeping in your tent, and I'm just going to put manna in your mouth.

They had to go out, and they had to gather it to eat their daily bread. Guys, we got to go out, and we have to tap into God. We have to enjoy the daily bread. Jesus said, you know what? You feasted on the bread in the desert, right?

[30 : 52] I am the bread that came from heaven. I am the true bread that came from heaven. I am the bread of life. And so we have Jesus. We go to him, and we feast on him. And so when we go to scripture, we don't go for anything else but to find Jesus in there, to hear from him, to learn about his love and his goodness and his grace and his mercy and his power and all that thing, how he is for us and what he says over us and how he fights against the words of the accuser to break through his lies.

All we can do, guys, is be faithful. You cannot force fruitfulness in your life. The Holy Spirit is the one who brings about fruit, but we are called to practice faithfulness.

We can't force result. That is in God's hands. And we do that by this amazing and trusting in our amazing Savior, trusting in that he has reconciled us.

He calls us holy. He calls us blameless. He calls us above reproach. If you're here and you're not a Christian, salvation isn't you earning it, okay?

You don't have to get your life together before Jesus accepts you. You don't have to be doing all the right things. Salvation isn't beyond you because of any sin you've committed.

[32 : 08] God is calling you today. He is holding out this free gift of reconciliation. And I want to say to you what this passage is screaming at. Stop minimizing your sin.

Stop resisting the reality that you are hostile, belonging to the side that hates Jesus. You know what? Put your faith in him today. While you were his enemy, Jesus died for you.

That's an amazing thing to ponder and think about. And I want to invite you to come and put your faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. And be reconciled to him and experience that transformation.

Now I want to say to those of us in the room who are Christians, we are believers. We put our faith in Jesus. Man, be who you are. Be who you are. God, a sinner, saved by grace, through faith, and the sufficient work of Jesus on the cross.

Jesus is everything. There's no little tack onto that. It's not Jesus plus something. Jesus is everything. And so what do we do? We start with him and we remain in him.

[33 : 13] Right? Some of us have been reading through the gospel of John. John 15 this morning, abiding in Christ. He says, apart from me, you can do something? Nothing.

Abide in him. Remain in him. Right? That's what we're called to do. We're called to do abiding work. Remaining in Christ. And I want to ask you today, what's the effort?

Not the earning. What is the effort you are putting into abiding in Jesus? And before we come and we take communion, I want you to consider the next step that Jesus is calling you to make as his disciple.

And if you've pondered that a moment and responded to that, then let's come celebrating that Jesus paid it all. All of our sins, like we sang earlier, I mean, he's washed them away.

He's made us white as snow. He's reconciled us to himself through his blood on the cross. And we remember that on the night that Jesus was betrayed, he broke bread with his disciples.

[34 : 17] He said, this is my body broken for you. Take and eat. And he took the cup and he said, this is the cup. This cup is the blood of my new covenant. The forgiveness of your sins.

Take and drink. And so we come. We come to the table because our Savior has reconciled us to himself. He invites us. You're invited as saved and washed and holy and blameless and beyond accusation.

And let's come and enjoy Jesus and be thankful and come with faith in who he is. Let's pray together. Lord, you are, we're going to say it once again, the greatest of all time.

Like this short little letter said, you are preeminent. You're before all things. You're the author and the perfecter of our faith. And Lord, we never move away from you.

We're tempted at times. We're tempted to say, ah, we need Jesus, but we need something else to add to it. But we're reminded in this, man, it's you who reconciled us to yourself. Your gospel, man, it came and you made it alive to us.

[35 : 24] We believed in it and it totally transformed who we are. Lord, help us. And help us as we seek to endure and hold fast to this gospel.

We confess that we need your help, Holy Spirit. And so help us in that, grow us in that, grow us in love, that our love and affection and desire for you would just be on a constant trajectory upward.

Sure, there might be setbacks. But Lord, you are faithful to forgive. So thank you for that, Lord God. Amen. Amen. Amen.