

Title: THE STORY OF RECONCILIATION, COLOSSIANS 1:21-22
(Chatham, NJ; 02/14/16, AM) [E – Topical]

Theme: The entire biblical narrative of creation, sin, and redemption tells the story of how we separated from God but were reconciled to him by the death of Christ.

Purpose: To tell the story of temptation and sin, and to present the graciousness of God's reconciliation through Christ.

Introduction:

1. Perhaps you've heard the term "postmodernism"; this way of thought suggests there are no larger narratives that tell us anything about who we are. We part company on this.
2. The Bible portrays the story of creation, sin, and redemption. This narrative informs everything we believe about the world and ourselves.
3. Let's use a word we can understand without the religious overtones: reconciliation, the process of restoring a friendship/relationship between two parties.
4. Paul pleads with the Corinthians to "be reconciled to God," 2 Corinthians 5:20.
5. The idea assumes a separation, a broken relationship, or some divisive issue that has come between the two parties.
6. Colossians 1:21 says, before Christ, humanity was alienated and hostile to God because of our evil behavior.
7. One of the early kings of Israel, Jeroboam, is criticized by a prophet when he committed idolatry that he cast God behind his back.
8. Essentially this happened in the Garden of Eden.

I. Alienation from God Begins with Temptation

- A. Genesis 3 – Enter the evil voice
 1. Satan twists God's command
 2. He makes evil sound appealing: you won't die, you'll become like God
 3. I think there is an implied smirk in the serpent's talk: I know better than you
 4. He does what Isaiah 5:20 criticizes in his fellow Israelites: he calls evil good and good evil, or at least he subtly suggests it
 5. The allure of forbidden fruit has been with us ever since.
- B. Presence of evil desires is strong
 1. Cain fails to overcome his, Genesis 4:7, and is forever known as a murderer, 1 John 3:12
 2. David failed to overcome the evil desire to sleep with another man's wife
 3. Jesus faced temptations before—an probably during—his work on earth, Luke 4
 4. James 1:14 describes temptation simply as being "enticed by desire."
 5. Temptation always involves a choice: even when the desire is strong

II. Temptation Has Led to Sin

- A. The moment of conception
 1. James 1:15 describes the birth of sin as desire being conceived
 2. Desires and impulses are sin in themselves
 3. But sin comes to life the moment one satisfies the sinful desire
 4. Between desire and sin lies choice
 5. We can't fall back to excuses: I can't resist _____, this is who I am, I didn't mean to hurt anybody, It's OK as long as nobody gets hurt, etc.
- B. John describes sin as lawlessness, 1 John 3:4
 1. Do not expect society in general to extol the virtues of obedience; they love the rebel, the renegade, and those who "play by their own rules."

2. They can use euphemisms for what they do: pioneers, trailblazers, and bold adventurers
3. More often applied to those who disobey God's rules: John calls this lawlessness and it is the essence of sin.
4. We cannot claim to know God if we do not obey him, 1 Jn. 2:3-4

III. Evil Behavior Has Separated Us from God, Isaiah 59:1-2 (read this)

A. Colossians 1:21-22

1. Paul is speaking to Christians who have experienced the new birth
2. However, he speaks of their previous state as being alienated from God
3. Even "hostile in mind" – do we think of our sinful state as being at war with God?
4. When will the hostilities end?

B. Reconciled by the body of Christ

1. Continuing in Colossians we find out that a reconciliation has been offered
2. It took his "body of flesh by his death" to do it, 22
3. C. S. Lewis said, "It cost God nothing so far as we know to create the world, but to convert rebellious wills cost him crucifixion."
4. God won't despise "a broken and contrite heart," Psalm 51:17 (David learned this after a lengthy, protracted period of denial of his sin.)
5. God's Son on the cross bridges the gap and reconciles us to Him.

Conclusion:

1. Paul appeals to the Corinthians, "Be reconciled to God," (2 Corinthians 5:20b).
2. Perhaps you have a sin that needs to be brought before God, and perhaps it needs a bit more than your personal approach to him—this is good.
3. There may be a time that you need some help with that sin.
4. We provide this opportunity to get the help you need: you don't have to bare every sin before the congregation, so we ask that you confess to God at this time.
5. If you need the prayers of the congregation, come forward.
6. God awaits your reconciliation to Him.