**Colossians 1:21-23**

I. Introduction

A. “This is the gospel” (v. 23)

Today we want to make sure we all hear the gospel, whether we’ve heard it many times before or are hearing it for the first time

B. At the heart of the gospel is Reconciliation (v. 22)

 1. Notice the “once . . . but now” pattern of verse 21-22.

2. Consider Jesus’ story of reconciliation known as the prodigal son: “once was lost but now is found.”

II. Our lives before Christ: Alienation (v. 21)

A. Alienation because of our “mindset”

1. The essence of this mindset (ala Adam and Eve and the tree of knowledge of good and evil) is the decision to decide for ourselves what is good and evil, right and wrong, what will lead to fulfilment and happiness apart from God

2. It is a mental “declaration of independence” from the creator (much like the prodigal son’s declaration of independence from his father)

 B. This mindset plays itself out in certain “behaviors”

See Paul’s list of sinful behaviors in Col 3:5-8

1. Sexual immorality: I’ll decide for myself how to express myself sexually

2. Desire and greed: I’ll decide for myself what to pursue and worship

3. Anger, rage, malice, etc.: that’s what you get when you put individuals who are all living for themselves into a room with each other

C. There is also a religious version of this

1. That same independent mindset plays itself out in trying to deal with our own sense of brokenness through our own moral actions apart from God’s grace

2. The older son in the prodigal son story represents that version—he too, like his younger brother, is alienated from his father

D. When people are alienated from each other they have a certain posture towards each other

1. Our posture towards God: prideful independence

2. God’s posture towards us: love and compassion but also wrath (=a steady and consistent opposition to our sinful choices)

E. We were designed for life in Eden/in the Father’s house, but now we wake up to a world outside of Eden that is alienated from its creator. We experience the pain of this around us and within us.

III. Our lives with Christ: Reconciliation (v. 22)

A. Reconciled by Christ’s physical body through death

1. How does Christ’s death reconcile us to God?

2. It has to do with God’s posture towards us. The biggest barrier to our reconciliation is God’s holy and just wrath. Christ’s death on the cross pays the just penalty for our sins and deals with the issue of God’s wrath.

 B. To present us in his sight holy, without blemish, and free of accusation

1. God’s posture towards us is now entirely different. Because we are “in Christ” he sees us as having the righteousness of Jesus

 2. Where do you need to experience this good news today?

a. Without blemish: many of us are aware of our faults and flaws, and we experience a sense of shame or inadequacy, but God sees us as faultless in Christ

b. Free from accusation: many of us hear those voices of accusation for our secret sins and dark pasts but God has freed us from all accusation because Jesus has taken our accusations upon himself.

 C. The Father gets to decide whether we are worthy to be his children or not

1. The prodigal son said, “I’m not worthy to be called your son,” but the Father gave him his status as a son

2. The gospel is that God has done everything to reconcile us to himself and to call us his sons and daughters. He has gone all the way to reconcile us.

 D. Our only appropriate response to this is faith (v. 23)

1. Faith = giving up your prideful, self-reliant posture and trusting what Jesus has done for you and entrusting your life to him.

2. The kind of faith Paul is talking about is not a one-time decision, but a lifetime commitment to trust in Jesus (see v. 23)

IV. Celebrating communion

A. In communion, we remember the sacrifice Jesus made for us (the bread= his body, the cup = his blood)

B. In communion, Jesus invites us to share a meal with him. It’s a time of personal connection and fellowship with him and with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

C. How to receive communion

1. Maybe you are a non-Christian but would like to put your faith in Jesus. This is an opportunity to do that.

2. Maybe you are a Christian but have been in a season of distance and separation from God. This is an opportunity to draw near again.

3. Maybe you are a Christian going through a relatively good season with the Lord. Is there an area in your life where you would like him to draw near?

**Discussion Questions**

1. On Sunday we discussed the alienation the world has experienced because of a basic mindset. Talk about the nature of that mindset (consider the tree of the knowledge of good and evil). How is that mindset the root of all sin? How do you see that mindset still playing out in your own life? In our culture at large?

2. Reconciliation (v. 22) is such a wonderful word and reality. To what extent to you enjoy the goodness of your reconciliation with God on a daily basis? What would it look like for you to do that? Where do you struggle with that?

3. Consider the way Paul describes “faith” in v. 23. What do you notice about his description and emphasis there? How does that square with how you’ve heard faith described in the past? What questions or issues does that raise for you?

4. For those of you who took communion on Sunday, consider the three postures towards communion articulated at the very end of Sunday’s message. How did you experience communion? Was there a particular posture you had, and how was that experience for you?