

Rappahannock Christian Church – 5-11-08
Dr. Kenneth Wilbur – Pastor

Guest Speaker: Rev. Lyle Predmore

Communion Meditation

As we come to the Lord's Table we are reminded of the words of the Apostle Paul to the church in Corinth where he wrote:

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 – For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes

The Whole Fullness

Colossians 1:15-20 - He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Our scripture reading this morning is one of the letters of Paul. They all follow pretty much the same pattern. He begins with some basic Christian principles that he wraps his message for that particular church in for delivery.

In our scripture reading this morning Paul outlines how Christ is supreme – the ultimate in faith – the way to know God and what God wants and needs and expects.

Image of the invisible God – first born of creation. Christ was there with God, a part of God, active from the first, most ancient part of creation. First born.

All creation – things in heaven and on earth – thrones and powers and rulers and authority – all of this Christ was there with God in the creation and God is head of all of this.

And the church? He is head of that too.

And in all this creation, in these kingdoms, in this church we have the fullness of God in Christ dwelling.

This is a basic tenet of faith that Paul wraps his letter in – but not the reason for the letter. Paul usually writes to address a problem in a given congregation, in this case the church at Colossae.

Problem he is addressing – what is it?

We don't know exactly what that problem or those problems are – because we haven't heard the other side of the conversation. How does Paul know about these problems? Who told him – did he see them – did someone tell him? Someone write him a letter? Text him? Something on their Facebook page? We are not always sure – we are not privy to that part of the conversation. What we have Paul's response, his guidance for fixing the situation.

The Problems?

Listen: - it seems he really gets to them in chapter 3.

Remember – these are the problems that “those people” have – not ours. But we are sort of curious about their problems – knowing about their problems is not gossip – it is just enlightenment. So we know what the real situation is. Here are some he gets to in Chapter 3:

3:5 put to death earthly nature. What is that? Defines: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed which is idolatry. Greed is defined as Idolatry. That is something that is worshipped – replaces God as object of worship.

Wow – those folks back in those days had some serious problems didn't they? Listen to that list! Sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed!

And that is not all:

3:8 rid yourselves of anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language.

3:9 do not lie to each other.

Are we talking about church folks here? You mean those people in that church lie to each other. What kind of lies – he doesn't say. But of course anyone with anger, rage, malice and slander as a part of their make up probably lie also.

And Paul continues:

3:11 there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free.

What kind of problem is that? You mean there were both Greeks and Jews in the congregation? And barbarians and Scythians – and some were slaves and some were slave owners in that same congregation? Wow – what a mixture – that must have been a neat group of folks coming together each week. So what could the problems be?

We get a bird's eye view of the reason Paul is writing this letter to those folks a long time ago and in a far away place. They had some serious issues to deal with, didn't they! Glad old Paul was able to straighten them out.

But today? 8 August 2010 at Rappahannock Christian Church – in Essex County? We've got it together. Paul has an interesting history lesson – good to be enlightened about the problems that those folks had – so guess we can just say Amen and go to lunch?

Well – maybe not – look at that list again. Maybe, just maybe there are some people here in this area that have those problems. I hope those Methodist down the road are reading this scripture today. I hope their pastor is pointing out how they are a lot like the church at Colossae. I hope they are getting a good sermon on these sins. And the Baptist – boy do they need to hear this. The RC – now there is a group that Paul is speaking too.

But us? No. Well, not me. And not you – but we might have one or two in our congregation that needs a sermon about these things. I wish they were here today. That is the reason they need it – they are never here.

Well – maybe there are some here that need to hear it – not me of course. But let me tell you what I heard about - - - -

This is not gossip now – but just something you should know about.

So – we agree? The church at Colossae had some serious issues. Today, August 2010 – some of these issues, well maybe all of these issues are still alive and well. In that other church. “Those people” – need to hear this.

But just in case I was doing a real sermon today, and picking out a topic or two from this list to preach about – two issues might come to mind.

One is the “fullness” issue, one of those basic tenets of the Christian faith that Paul bases everything else on – that is that ALL creation, seen and unseen, is in the image of God, and God in Christ.

This last week I read an article by David Lose, Dr. Lose teaches Homiletics at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN.

He writes:

I need your help. You see, I've got a problem. I don't think I'm the only one, but sometimes it's hard to tell because we don't often talk about this. My problem is money. It's not that I don't have enough. It's just that I often think, and believe, and act like I don't have enough – enough money, enough time, enough stuff. More than that, I live in a culture that regularly tells me that I don't have enough. Television commercials, billboards, and the internet all not only tell me that I'm insufficient, incomplete, and not quite right on my own, but they also promise me that if I only buy the product they're pushing – be it a tube of toothpaste, new laptop, or better car – then I'll be complete. Our culture unequivocally equates consumption with satisfaction, possessions with happiness, and material wealth with the good life.

If I were preaching a sermon, it seems that our friend David has hit on a problem that needs to be addressed. Consumerism. Greed. Didn't Paul mention “greed” as a problem that some folks have? Singles it out, Idolatry. Serious stuff.

Of course there is a fine line between greed and need. The other day Harbor Freight had an add in the newspaper, hammers on sale for 99 cents. I have a good hammer – in fact probably two or three. But I just dropped by Harbor Freight to see if there was anything I needed – and sure enough those hammers were on sale for 99 cents. Some of them were framing hammers. Right now we are framing a Habitat house – the hammers I have seem to work okay – but I don't have a framing hammer.

And 99 cents – now that is need. Greed is what those other guys have that I had to push out of the way to get to the sale counter where the hammers are at.

Hiroko sometimes goes shopping too. Imagine that. Some days she just doesn't have a thing to wear. She almost came to church today in her PJs. Sometimes she just needs a new blouse. That is a need. Greed is what those other women have that you have to push out of the way to get to the sale rack.

With greed we might find some of that anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language Paul mentions. Greedy people might use that kind of language at a really good sale.

We might make a sermon out of that – you and I are okay – we don't need it – but I think there are some down at that other church that put their fullness in those greedy things instead of finding fullness in Christ, where the image of God is found.

Or another sermon here today that is a top news concern in our nation is the Greek/Jew thing that Paul talks about. Today we call it immigration. And recently it is the Arizona law going the extra mile to find illegal immigrations.

Greek and Jew thing? Hispanic and the rest of us thing? Is there a sermon there? Paul would have us believe that Greek, Jew, Scythian, Roman, Democrat, Republican, black, white. Hispanic, Tea Party or Me Party, we are all a part of God's creation, His children. That for the whole specter of God's creation, man on the moon or alien from Mars – all the children of his creation we are all the same.

So why do we have so much fun dividing people up? Talk about stirring up some of that anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language – then talk about immigration.

Sermon here?

Maybe it really goes with Greed? I have mine – go get your own? I'll put a fence around mine – put up a no trespassing keep out sign". Private. Keep Out. The Chinese put up a Great Wall once to keep the Mongolians out.

On the news this past week a news caster was telling about many Hispanics, some US Citizens, some legal immigrants, some illegal – but hundreds – thousands leaving Arizona. There was an interview with some that had moved to New Mexico. One made the comment that here in New Mexico someone smiled at me. I guess no one in Arizona smiles when they see a Hispanic person these days.

Another one said that I met a sheriff's car on the road, and the deputy didn't even give me a second look. I knew I was not in AZ any longer.

A sermon here? There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave or free but Christ is all and in all".

As Disciples we have a little saying: "Alexander Campbell was an immigrant, Jesus was a refugee".

Paul had an answer for the folks at Colossae – and it still fits today.

3:12 As God's chosen people, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

–3:14 – And over all thee virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

I receive all sorts of emails – cute sayings – crude sayings, political points from across the whole spectrum of creation. One this past week is quotes of children who were asked about love. Maybe embellished by an adult?

'When you love somebody, your eyelashes go up and down and little stars come out of you.' Karen - age 7

- Talk about all creation responding – the stars come out!

'I know my older sister loves me because she gives me all her old clothes and has to go out and buy new ones.' Lauren age 4

-- The older sister has a future in marketing!

'Love is like a little old woman and a little old man who are still friends even after they know each other so well.' Tommy age 6

-- Love is like members of RCC who are still friends ever after they know each other so well.

'You really shouldn't say 'I love you' unless you mean it. But if you mean it, you should say it a lot. People forget.'

Jessica - age 8

-- People forget - - so we read Paul's letters often.

'Love is what's in the room with you at Christmas if you stop opening presents and listen.' Bobby - age 7

3:14 – And over all thee virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

2:19 For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ. Amen