

The Last Sunday of the Church Year
Colossians 1:13-20
Rev Joseph Highley
(transcribed from his sermon on Sunday, November 20th, 2022)

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God, our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair. And what is that from? *A Tale of Two Cities*. Raise your hand if you've read it. Yeah, me either. That of course is the beginning, though, to that epic novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*. I will submit this morning that as we look at the Bible, not to look at the Bible as a tale of two cities, but a Tale of Two Adams, A Tale of Two Adams, looking at the Bible from that perspective.

Our text for this last Sunday in the church year is Colossians chapter one, verse 13 through 20. We're here at the end of times. We're here at looking at eternity, where we'll be. Then we switch over to Advent next week. We have Thanksgiving service this coming Wednesday, Thanksgiving Eve service, and then we're on to our Wednesday evening Advents focusing on who Jesus is.

This morning we're on Colossians chapter one, verse 13 through 20. The first thing I want to focus on here is verse 15, Christ Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the image of the invisible God. Now, it may not seem like it, but that is a really loaded statement. The statement takes us all the way back to Genesis chapter one, verse 26, when God said, let us make man in our own image after our likeness. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female, he created them.

That is the story of the first Adam. He was created in the image of God. He was the image bearer of God on earth. That we are descended from. This is the Adam that we are heirs to. It's pretty cool. Made in the image of God.

Let's see what that Adam does with that image of God on earth. Well, A, he had a desire to be like God. Satan's temptation in the Garden of Eden to break the one rule they had been given was that you can be like God if you eat this fruit. Boom. Sin comes in. Pride. Adam wasn't God. He was made in the image of God, but he wasn't God.

So what does he do? He desires to be like God. He desires to be the creator, even though he is the creature. Seeking out to be like God, he exalted himself. He tried to make himself higher than he was. He tried to put himself in that creator position. As a god himself – I can be a god – but that's not who he was created to be.

Thus, he ate of the forbidden fruit and see, in doing so, he disobeyed God. Deliberately. Intentionally. He stepped out of bounds that he'd been given as a creature, the one bound that he'd been given. The one limit that helped him to know who he was, he steps out of and he disobeys God.

The punishment, D, was to be cast out of the garden, to be cast into the darkness, cast out from the presence of God and trying to usurp God and trying to be equal with God when he was not. Adam severed his relationship with God, declared himself in rebellion against a God who would put rules on him. Who are you, God, to give me rules? I make the rules here. So God leaves him to his own ways, left in the domain of darkness. In doing all this, Adam lost the divine image. The divine image he was made in is lost.

He's no longer the bearer of the divine image on earth. He is no longer pure. He is no longer holy. Brothers and sisters, we are heirs of this Adam. We suffer the same consequences. He is our ancestral father and we are in the same lot as him.

But I did say this was a tale of two Adams. So what about the second Adam?

The second Adam did not consider a equality with God something to be grasped. Which has some sort of irony or something to it, I don't know what the literary term is. Because the second Adam is God. Jesus the Christ, the Son of God is God and yet he didn't consider equality with God something to be grasped.

Now, a note about Adams briefly, I've made this point before. Adam is a name that just simply means man in Hebrew. So the first person is given the name man in Hebrew. So we have the first man, we have the second man. And so I'm talking about the first man. We have Adam. The first born of creation, the first who is created as man formed from the dust, and Eve from his side. You have them who broke the rule to eat the fruit, who rebelled against God, and then you have the second man. This is Jesus. He is the one who is fully man as he should have been. If anyone could say, I'm equal to God and I'm going to put myself in the position of God, that would be Jesus. And yet he didn't.

He did the opposite of the first Adam. B, he humbled himself, where the first Adam exalted himself, he humbled himself. He took himself and put himself as a servant to all. He put himself as the lowest of the low. He didn't exercise the rights of authority that he had, that he had every right to exercise. He humbled himself.

In humility, C, he was obedient to God. He demonstrated such obedience that even willingly he died on the cross in obedience to God. He was obedient to the point of death. God recognized that obedience, his perfect sacrifice, and God raised him from the dead.

Finally this Jesus, the second Adam, though he walked in the land of darkness he walked as the true light on this earth, A world full of darkness, thick darkness of sin. He was the true

light that had come into the world, the true first born of all creation, the true light, dwelling in the darkness, and bringing light to the darkness.

That is the tale of the two Adams. It's a great tale, but as has been said, what's in it for me? Which is really a selfish way of looking at this, but indeed, what's in it for us? What good does this tale of the two Adams do for us? It's a great tale, but if that's just it, then how are we involved? We're stuck with the curses of the first Adam, because we're his descendants and that's about all there is to it.

We need something, what we need is a transfer, and that's exactly what we're given. We're given a transfer by Jesus. We're transferred from the domain of darkness to the domain of light. We're transferred from the domain of the first Adam, from the domain of the curses that come with him, and we're transferred into the blessings of the second Adam.

We're transferred from sin; transferred to holiness. We're transferred from the first Adam to the second. That transfer happens by way of the cross. Now let's pause just for a moment. Let's think about this act of transferring. Let's think of it like a bank transfer. That's kind of what it is. It's a transaction.

So I'm going to break the rules. I'm going to pull out my phone here. I'm going to pull out my phone. This is going to be really cool. I'm going to pull up Venmo. Jennifer Heitman, where you at? Pull out your phone. Venmo. Got Jennifer's profile here. Pay request. I'm going to pay \$2. What's it for? "An awesome sermon."

Pay. Pay, pay right now. There we go. Okay, you have your phone out, pull up your Venmo. Check. It says, "You sent a payment." Did you receive it?

[Jennifer answers] \$2 for an awesome sermon

\$2 for an awesome sermon. She can verify it. I'm not lying. She's not lying. Payment made, transferred \$2. Don't spend all that in one place.

So, I no longer have those \$2. Those \$2 – don't transfer that back, that's going to ruin the sermon – it is sent. We both verified it's been sent, she's received the \$2. I sent it. It now belongs to Jennifer. She can do what she wants with it. She can invest in a house, make a down payment on something. It's her \$2. It is not mine. I no longer have access to it.

I don't have control over it. I have no say over it in any way, shape or form. I can't, I can't. It's hers. It's Jennifer's. You'll notice that that \$2, it did nothing on its own to make its way from me to Jennifer. It didn't say, "Hey, you're a bad owner of \$2 send me to somebody else." No, it just was acted upon.

It had to be acted upon from the outside source. The \$2 can't move itself. I had to choose to move it and Jennifer received it. That's the transfer. \$2 from one person to another. Simple as

that. Simple as just a couple buttons on the phone. I guess it's not buttons because it's a touch screen, whatever. That simply is what Christ does for us.

Jesus transfers us like that \$2 from one domain to the other. The thing is, we don't exist in both. That's not how transfers work. Yes. Are we both sinner and saint? That's a big Lutheran distinction. Are we simultaneously sinner and saint? Of course we are. We're saints. We're made holy, but we sure still sin a lot.

That's true. But where's our dwelling? What is our domain that we are in? Who do we belong to? We're not both in the domain of darkness and the domain of light. We don't belong to both the devil and to God. No! No, no, no, no! We have been transferred from all of that. We don't belong to it anymore. We belong to Christ.

We are in the kingdom of light right now. That's how transfers work. Just this morning we actually got to witness it. Little Jenna Jane was transferred to the kingdom of light. By faith, she is now a precious child of God in our midst, transferred into his kingdom. Where I made a bank transfer to Jennifer, Jesus makes a cross transfer for us. We are out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of life, by that cross transfer. Fully bringing us out of our old state, we don't exist there anymore. Sure, we still sin. That's the old Adam, the first Adam clinging to us, but we belong to Christ and his kingdom.

And nothing short of this cross transfer could remove us from that domain of darkness that we were in. We were in rebellion. We were at war with God and through the cross, we are brought into God's kingdom through the cross, our war is now at peace. Which is really quite the way of thinking about it if you really get down to it.

The only way we have peace with God, the only way this war is able to cease, is through a bloody wooden cross. Through Jesus' sacrifice of himself, there is peace. Peace comes through violence. It's pretty unexpected. But it makes sense because that's what it took to end the war. The rebellion, the disobedience that the first Adam brought all of us, had to be punished. It had to be punished by God, and it was. The punishment that had to be born by the first Adam was instead born by the second Adam on the cross.

Which brings me to my final point about these two Adams. The first Adam lost the image of God for all mankind. The second Adam, Jesus, through his death and resurrection, has regained the image of God to mankind for all who believe.

So the final question we have to ponder is that great Lutheran question, what does this mean? What does this all mean for you? Sitting here in the pew, November 20th, 2020? It means everything. Literally, the entire meaning of your life is altered because you have been transferred from one domain, one kingdom, to the kingdom of Jesus.

Your whole life takes a new shape. You have life. You have life abundantly. You have eternal life, right now. The big focus of this end of the church year. You have eternity in your possession, right now. That certainly shapes the way we think about things. You don't have to wait for it to be yours. It's yours, and you have forgiveness of your sins now and for eternity. You're restored to be the creature you're supposed to be.

You're reconciled with your creator. The creature you were meant to be is now yours. You are made in the image of God. This means we conform to Christ's image, not the image of the sinful first Adam. We follow Jesus. We follow his example because of who he made us to be. He has redeemed and he has saved us.

So we follow him. Christ is our Lord. We're obedient to him just as he was obedient to the Father, obedient even to death.

Most of us in this room will never be killed for our faith. We won't have to be obedient to be nailed to a cross and die, but we do have to crucify our old self. Our old Adam, our old Eve, our old sinful self, every single day. So we are obedient to death. Every day we die in obedience to ourself, and we live in obedience to Christ. We die in obedience to ourselves. That is dead and we live in obedience to Christ. We follow Jesus' will for our lives.

You want to know what God's will for your life is. It's to love God and to serve and love your neighbor. Ah, but I need to know exactly what I'm supposed to do in this certain circumstance. Love God. Love and serve your neighbor. Whoever comes into your path, love and serve them. Prioritize the other over ourselves. That's the example Jesus shows us. He was the greatest human to ever live because he was also God, and yet he served all of humanity.

He served us all. So we who are servants in his kingdom, the kingdom of light, serve like Jesus served. It's not about us and what we want. It's not about our own preferences. It's about caring for all.

What a joy. What a joy. Gosh, we, it's like, uh, give up my preferences? I know! What a joy it is that we get to serve like Jesus.

What a joy that we get to wake up each and every day and serve like Jesus served. We'll mess up. Inevitably, we will mess up all the time because that old, sinful self, it still clings to us. That's not what our identity is. Your identity is that you were forgiven. You are a child of the kingdom of light of Christ.

It's a tale of two Adams. You had belonged to the first, but now you've been transferred to the kingdom of the Second Adam, Jesus, through the blood of his cross. Follow his ways. Amen.

May the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts, your minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord.