

What Do You See?

Amos 8:1-12; Colossians 1:15-28

How do you see Jesus? Paul indicates in this scripture that in order to see God, who we have not seen, we only need look to Jesus, who is Emmanuel, "God with us," "the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all things in heaven and on earth...through whom and for whom all things all things have been created."

Paul continues that through him all things hold together, the head of the church, and that he has first place in everything. That is perhaps the most important statement of this scripture, especially in light of the state of our world today.

In this world, where people are driven by fear of "the other" killing those who are different; for the color of their skin, the width of their nose, the style of their hair; the political views they hold; the clothes they wear; the neighborhood in which they live; the God to whom they pray; we need desperately to hear the words of Paul, "for in him all things hold together." Jesus is portrayed in this passage as the cosmic reconciler, through whom God restores harmony between God and all of creation.

"For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, **BY MAKING PEACE THROUGH THE BLOOD OF HIS CROSS.**" Make no mistake, Jesus saw himself as God. Jesus, fully human and fully divine, was and is God. It is through Jesus that God reconciled the world to himself. It is through Jesus Christ that God is bringing peace to the world. The bloody death and the life-preserving resurrection of Jesus Christ is God's eternal gift of peace to all humankind. We can fear, we can hate, we can kill, but in the end, God, through Jesus Christ has the last word...and that word is L-O-V-E. Love, through the saving grace of God, is the last word. You know the words. Say them with me.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world...through him...might be saved."

Throughout the last weeks I have asked, where is the voice of the church leaders, where is the voice of God in all this chaos of hatred and killing?

So, I ask you again, how do you see Jesus? The purpose of the church is to proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord. The purpose of the church is to make sure that the world knows that God, through Jesus Christ, has redeemed the world. The purpose of the church is to spread the

Word of God throughout the Land, so that all may know that our hope is in the One who made Heaven and earth. The purpose of the church is to give sight to those who are blinded by fear; to feed those who hunger and thirst for the Food that promises life; the purpose of the church is to cloth with the whole armor of God, those who stand naked in the world of war and hatred; the purpose of the church is to offer Life to those who bring death, to welcome those who have been imprisoned by hatred and fear, loneliness and pain, to offer hope in a world of hopeless behavior.

It is not easy, in fact it is disconcerting to do what it takes to pinpoint our individual view of Jesus and then move into the world and offer that Jesus to others. Moving from universal concepts to specific realities is a jarring experience. It's one thing to talk about poverty; it's another to walk two miles carrying dirty water with a thirsty child clinging to your waist. It is far easier to talk about Jesus in general terms than it is to become a part of the picture with Jesus, to see yourself in the picture with Jesus. It is far easier to sit in the comfort and safety of your living room and hear the news of death and anger, than it is to go out into the streets proclaiming the message of Hope and reconciliation offered by the Word of God. It is far easier to offer a hand out, than to offer a hand up.

We live in a world that desperately needs to SEE God's love in action. We live in a world that is crying out for HOPE? We live in a world that needs the CHURCH to be church....not just on Sunday morning, inside these four walls , but every minute of every day, out there, pointing to all the ways, and being the ways that Jesus is present in the world today.

Many theologians hold that these first verses of Paul's Letter to the people of Colossae are a part of a Christological hymn that was written prior to the actual letter. There is a favorite contemporary hymn of mine, which goes hand-in-hand with this passage and serves as an exposition of the person of Jesus Christ and his relationship to the world and to the Church. This hymn asks the question, "Have you seen Jesus my Lord?"

Have you seen Jesus my Lord? He's here in plain view. Take a look, open your eyes, he'll show it to you.

Have you ever looked at the sun set, with the sky mellowing red, and the clouds suspended like feathers, Then I'd say...you've seen Jesus my Lord.

Have you ever stood at the ocean with the white foam at your feet, Felt the endless thundering motion? Then I'd say... You've seen Jesus my Lord.

Have you ever stood in the family with the Lord there in your midst? Seen the face of Christ in each other...Then I'd say...you've seen Jesus my Lord.

Have you ever stood at the cross, with the man hanging in pain? Seen the look of love in his eyes? Then I'd say...you've seen Jesus my Lord.

We have seen evil in the world. We recognize the pain and hopelessness that drags and tears at our very being. But...have you seen Jesus? Where? How? Will you offer the hope that comes from God through Jesus Christ to the world that is caught up in hopeless, self-centered, evil behaviors? What do you see?