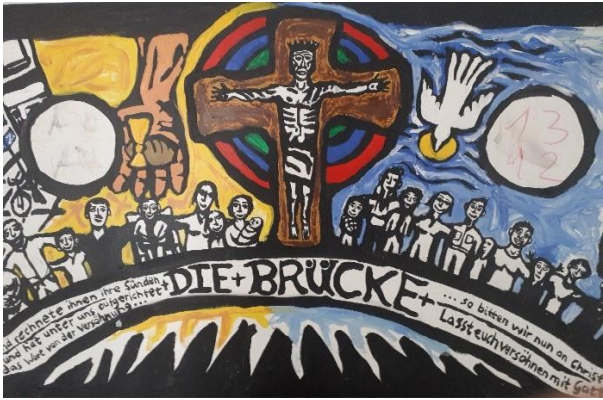


Reconciled!
Sermon for Good Friday
Sermon Text: Colossians 1:13-20



He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.¹⁶ For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things were created through Him and for Him.¹⁷ And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.¹⁸ And He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent.¹⁹ For in

Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,²⁰ and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross.

There was another terrible fight in the neighborhood again. First it started with an insult which was quickly returned with an even bigger one. Very soon, the insults worsened. In the end, things flew out the window and the police had to intervene. The neighbors observed the scene from afar. We all know what terrible consequences such disputes can have – families can separate, children are taken into the care of strangers, and in the worst cases, such altercations can end in murder and death.

What I just described is a situation that people know all too well. Even the Bible bluntly describes these conflicts. The first argument between Cain and Abel ended in Cain killing his brother, and things continue on in this way. People always find a reason for conflicts where it is rewarding to be violent.

What happened on Good Friday is the result of such a conflict. But Good Friday is not a dispute between two families or people, it's about so much more. It's about the conflict between all the powers of darkness that rebel against God. It's a fight that has existed since the beginning of human history and comes to its ultimate conclusion on Good Friday. In Jesus Christ who hangs on the cross, we see the final result of this conflict. His fresh blood flows into the earth, His body hangs lifeless on the cross, and dark clouds stretch over the whole earth.

On Good Friday, we remember all of this. The Good Friday service gives us an impression of sorrow and distress. The altar is clear and empty. That should remind us that Jesus hung naked and bare on the cross. We see the hate of the world which rebels against Jesus, and finally, we even see the dark side of God as He abandoned His Son and Jesus must cry out: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Mark 15:34) With this cry, it appears as though evil ultimately won. It seems that all those who claim that God either doesn't exist or that He has no interest in how we are doing here on earth, are right.

But that's just what it seems like at first glance. Today on Good Friday, the darkest day in world history, Paul, in his letter to the Colossians, opens the curtain a little bit and shows us a very different reality that takes place in the spiritual world. Paul shows us the balancing weight that God Himself puts on the scale at Golgotha. What God did on Good Friday is a mystery that has been with us since Christmas. What happens on Good Friday is that the Most High Himself takes our place. And He who is the Most High also pays the highest price. God Himself uses all His power. God Himself pays the highest price He can pay. The One who hangs there on the cross is the same who was already always there, through whom all things were made, who is above visible and invisible powers, God from eternity to eternity. Through the events on the cross at Golgotha, God tells us: "Look there! I give My life. I do that for you! You are worth it, not because you deserve it, but because I made you and because I decided to save you." As Isaiah already said: **"He was wounded for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His stripes we are healed."** (Isaiah 53:5) Through this dark event of

Jesus' suffering and death on the cross, the power of darkness is broken. All evil, violence, and hatred are broken because of this event on the cross.

Conflict and hatred have the potential to divide people. In conflict, you want to distance yourself from others and in the worst case, even cause harm. The exact opposite happens on the cross. There, God draws closer to us, and He tells us: "You belong to Me. I want to be close to you. I even want to be united with you." Through the cross, God wants to do much more than settle a dispute or straighten something that was crooked before. No, God wants to be united with us. Or, in other words, Christ is the head of the body, the church. We are His body. We physically belong to Jesus, permanently united with Him! All this happens through baptism. And when we go to Communion, we again become united to Christ. Whoever has recognized Who unites with us, also never wants to be separated from Him again. Amen.