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Colossians 1:13-23
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Remember Our Redeemer

Hi Everyone. My name is Larry Adams and I want to take a moment to thank you for reading this message. At Golden Hills we are committed to exalting Jesus and preaching the Word. Your downloading of this message is a great encouragement to us, as we know that our ministry is going out to spread God's Word all over the world.

We want you to know, too, that in no way do we intend these messages to be a replacement for your involvement in a good local church, where, sitting under the authority of pastors and other teachers, you can learn to worship, grow and serve and be engaged with a body of believers where you can grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We realize also, that some of you may be in areas of the world where there is no local church. Therefore, we hope these messages you are using, to gather with your family or other believers, or people from the community that it will be a great encouragement to you, as you hear God speak into your life, helping you to become disciples who are true, reproducing followers of Jesus Christ.

If you have your Bible, I'd like you to turn with me to the book of Colossians, chapter one. It didn't take long for heresy to begin to creep into the early church. The cults and others today who are putting our false doctrines and false Jesuses are not new – they've been around from the beginning. They just come in different versions, remade again and again and again. The Colossian heresy that Paul was addressing was a thing called Gnosticism. There were many varied pieces to Gnosticism, but knowledge was everything (today it would be like science and technology is everything) and people who believe that Jesus is God come in the flesh, that He died on a cross, rose again, that He is the only way to God – are pretty naïve, blinded or pretty misled. Sound familiar? It has been around a long time. Paul wrote this book of Colossians to refute all those things, but more than that, to call people back to a central view, that Jesus Christ is supreme. He is the eternal God, come in human flesh, lived a sinless life, went to a cross, paid for our sins, was buried in a tomb, rose again the third day, exalted to the right hand of the Father, and He is coming again. There is no other savior, no other redeemer, no other one that we can look to, to be saved. That's what Paul is telling them. (applause)

So here in Colossians 1, he talks about the price of redemption. Christ is our redeemer. This is how he put it (Col 1:13-23):

¹³ For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

¹⁵ The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ 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 and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. ¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ 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.

²¹ Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. ²² But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation— ²³ if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

Let's pray together: Father, we are gathered here together on a Sunday morning, and we are sharing together with all those who at this moment are watching with us on the live stream, all around the world. I thank You today, for the men and women in uniform who are watching with us from wherever they are. I thank you God for our many missionaries who are employed around the world, watching with us right now, wherever they are. And for the many people across the country, some in towns who have no church. They've found us and are tuning in. Others who are home sick and who are house-bound, who find this to be their connection each and every week. Father, wherever we are, whoever we are, today we come together to a table to remember the God who is our redeemer. The God who paid our ransom price, the God in whom there is salvation for all who believe. We pray, God, that through this time today, You will speak to us and we will hear Your voice and we will be different. Thank You, in Jesus' name, Amen.

If you are a Dodgers fan, beside our needing to pray for you (laughter), you may remember the name Lou Johnson. Lou Johnson was the hero of the 1965 World Series for the Los Angeles Dodgers. Lou Johnson had some issues in his life that began to claim him. By 1971, just a few years after that glorious season and World Series victory, of which he was the hero, he lost everything from that magical season. He lost his uniform, his glove, the bat he used to hit the winning home run in the decisive game, all of these things, along with his World Series ring, he sold to support a drug and alcohol habit. Lou Johnson's life began to be lost. For 30 years, he said, he would try to get back that World Series ring. But every time it would come up for auction or for sale, he barely had enough money to live on, or to buy food. It was impossible. For 30 years he tried and his life got worse and worse and worse. When Dodger president, Bob Graciano, learned of Lou Johnson's state, and that Lou had been trying to get back his World Series ring, he went on line and miraculously discovered Lou Johnson's World Series ring, going up on E-Bay for sale. It had a "Buy it now" price: \$3457. So Bob Graciano went on line, paid that fee and bought that ring before it went on auction. When he brought it to Lou, he handed it to him and Lou Johnson said, "I began to weep. When I held that ring in my hand, it was as though I'd been reborn. Bob Graciano saw that Lou's life was headed into the tank, so he began to work with him. Throughout those years, Lou became clean, free of drugs and alcohol. He actually went on to be the community relations person for the LA Dodgers.

When I read about Lou Johnson's story, I realized that what Bob Graciano did for Lou Johnson was more than redeem a ring. He redeemed a life. Many would say he gave to Lou Johnson what arguably many would say he didn't deserve. He certainly couldn't have paid for or achieved it for himself.

When I read Lou Johnson's story and the miraculous turn-around, I realized how on a much grander scale, that's exactly what Jesus has done for each of us. He has done it for me and He has done it for you. You see, sin had put us in a place where we had lost everything, including our lives. We were powerless to do anything to get that back on our own. We didn't deserve God's help and we couldn't have earned it. But Jesus came to redeem us, to pay our price. He redeemed us by His body and His blood, the very body and blood we're remembering today in Communion.

Just like Americans who forget their own history and end up being not very good Americans, so Christians who don't remember the sacrifice that was paid for them, end up being not very good Christians. So, from time to time, God has called us to remember our redemption price.

Communion is our remembrance of the death of Jesus and that it accomplished in redeeming and reconciling all things to God. This meal is a memorial. It's not just ritual, but it won't save you. It's a memorial. Eating this won't make you a Christian. It won't get your sins forgiven. It won't get you into heaven. It won't earn you any grace. But eating this can bring us face to face again with the one who has and is offering all of those things. The only one who can.

This do, Jesus said, as often as you eat it, in remembrance of me.

Paul told the Colossians to believe in the true Jesus: God in human flesh who lived, who died, who rose again, who lives to redeem and reconcile to God all who are lost in sin. That's why he said in verse 13-14: ¹³ "For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." And verse 19-22:

¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ 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.

²¹ Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. ²² But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation, if you continue in your faith, established and firm and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I Paul, have become a servant.

We are reminded that Communion shows us that God is reconciling all things to Himself through the redemption price paid by Christ on the cross.

What was that redemption price? Paul said it was His body and His blood. The body and the blood of Jesus is the redemption price that reconciles all things to God.

Paul said (vs 19) :

¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ 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.

²¹ Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. ²² But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation

People, sin has caused the damage to creation and humanity greater than we can see.

In the late 1970s, I was working for a city park department as a minimum-wage laborer. I had quit my white collar office job to take a job that would prepare me for Bible school, so I could do it after school and stuff like that. So I took this job at the parks. We were out on a job one day, to dig a hole for something. I don't remember what it was. There was a John Deere backhoe there and the rest of us standing around. Now, the city did not let employees use the heavy equipment unless they were trained to do it, for good reason. But I was young and impetuous and stupid, and we were standing around, waiting for the backhoe operator to come. I'm thinking, all of us are standing here, just waiting, wasting time. It's not a very big hole. I've run a backhoe before. I'm just going to do it! So I jumped on the

backhoe and I started digging this hole. I noticed – you know that long, shiny thing called the hydraulic that helps run the bucket on the end – I noticed that shiny thing that, the way I was digging, it was starting to bend, kind of into a U shape. I'm thinking – that ain't good! So, I put the bucket in the hole and I'm trying to bend it back, and I pulled it up – now it was in an S shape. I said, that ain't good! The bucket wouldn't work. My boss pulled up. He saw that and said, "Who did this?"

Everybody goes whoosh – looking at me! I said, "Yea, it was me."

He goes, "Hey, you know you're not supposed to drive it."

"I know. I thought I could do it. I'm sorry."

He goes, "Do you understand what you've done here?"

I said, "Uh, apparently not. I know I've wrecked this thing, but I don't know how bad."

He said, "You wrecked it bad!"

In fact that thing was in the shop for a couple of weeks. I have no idea how much it cost, but it was extremely expensive. A lot more than a minimum-wage worker could pay, I'll tell you that. The city paid it all. They let me keep my job. They kept me a long way away from the other equipment. But you know, I learned a very valuable lesson that day: We can do things and make choices that have effects that are more far-reaching than we think. Sometimes the damage we create is more than we can see and more costly than we can pay.

As I began to learn about my sin in the scriptures, I realized that my sin had created a lot more damage than I had ever imagined. The sin of all of us has created more damage in the world and in relationships than you and I could possibly imagine. In fact, it's beyond what any of us can fix. It has created a debt greater than any of us could pay. You see, humanity rebelled against God in the garden of Eden. This is the story that Satan doesn't want people to believe. Adam and Eve were real people, created by God and put in a real garden. The problem with the story is, that Adam and Eve, as the progenitors of the human race, decided one day that their way was better than God's way so instead of listening to what God had told them, they decided to take things into their own hands. They rebelled against God. They thought their way was better than God's and we've been paying the price for that rebellion every since. Sin entered the world and it has created more damage than you and I could possibly imagine. Their choice that day reaped us a creation in chaos, a humanity that is lost and broken, and is estranged from God. The damage is even greater than we can see, and what we can see, is very expensive and increasingly scary.

Sin has always had its effect in the world, but I think most of us would agree today that what's going on in the world is scary to an unprecedented level. Part of the reason it's so scary is, we're more aware of what's going on. What other generation could wake up in the morning and get a flash on this little device (cell phone) 39 people killed by a car bomb this morning in Iraq. I don't know if you are aware, or even this week, but almost everyday this week, there have been news notices of cataclysmic events around the world. Almost every day! We're more aware of these things than we've ever been.

The damage is greater than we can see, and on our own, we don't know what is wrong. Our solutions don't work. Despite all of our efforts, things continually get worse. Without God's intervention, things will never get better.

We have a very important election coming up. I hope you vote! Low information voters are a scourge on this country! They don't understand our history. They don't understand our constitution. They don't understand how government is supposed to work and they believe what most people tell them, which is why they keep electing people who bring about the results we get. I want you to know, whoever gets chosen in this next election, that's not the key. They aren't going to solve the problems that are going on in our world, I'll guarantee it.

God is the only one who can solve what is going on in the world. It has always been the case. That's what Paul was relating to these Colossian believers. Paul described the problem in verse 21: ²¹ "Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior." Alienated from God! That phrase in the Greek is written in the perfect tense, and what's significant about that is, it means a fixed position or state that we are powerless to correct. Paul is telling these people, you were alienated from God, the damage is greater than you know, and you cannot fix it. You cannot fix it!

We are alienated, estranged, separated. We're foreigners. Paul is saying, look! You're alienated from God! The world doesn't work the way God made it to work. Humanity doesn't work the way God made it to work. That's why, to God, we look like a bunch of aliens in an alien world. It is not what God designed! That's why when you become a Christian, you feel so out of step, because the world isn't functioning the way God made it to work. We are alienated. The world doesn't honor God, doesn't glorify God. It rejects Him and diminishes Him. So it has become like an alien, strange world to God. We are His enemies in our minds because of our evil behavior. That phrase "enemies" is the word for hatred toward God. We have corrupted His creation, we have distorted our humanity, and we have rejected His person. So we are enemies. Our evil behavior, Paul said, just proves it.

The damage is greater than we know. It's effected all of us.

Paul told the Romans (Romans 3: 9-20):

⁹ What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. ¹⁰ As it is written:

"There is no one righteous, not even one;

¹¹ there is no one who understands;

there is no one who seeks God.

¹² All have turned away,

they have together become worthless;

there is no one who does good,

not even one."

¹³ "Their throats are open graves;

their tongues practice deceit."

"The poison of vipers is on their lips."

¹⁴ "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness."

¹⁵ "Their feet are swift to shed blood; [does that sound like any place you know?]

¹⁶ ruin and misery mark their ways,

¹⁷ and the way of peace they do not know."

¹⁸ "There is no fear [respect, reverence] of God before their eyes."

¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. ²⁰ Therefore no one

will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.

So here is humanity, totally rebelled against God, travelling down this freeway to destruction. So what does God do? He posts a speed limit sign. That's the law. I don't know if I'm speeding unless there is a posted sign. Once I see the sign, I can look and see WHOA! I'm a law-breaker. God's law did that for humanity. It made us aware that we have broken God's law, and there is a penalty for that. That's the problem. We're under a curse, the curse of the law. We can't fix it; we can't solve it; we can't restore things and make them better. We can't do it. We have one hope. That hope is Jesus Christ Himself.

That's the hope held out in the gospel – the good news of the death, burial, resurrection and appearing of Jesus. That's why Paul told the Colossians that it was by the body and the blood of Jesus that we are redeemed and that all the brokenness and defilement is going to be paid for and be reconciled back to God. God is reconciling all things in heaven and earth to Himself, through the shed blood and body of Jesus Christ. No one else could do this. No one else would do this. That's why Paul told the Colossians, don't listen to the false teachers, don't go running after every Jesus that comes down the pike and don't believe every version of the gospel you hear, because it isn't true. This is the Jesus you want to follow! Colossians 1:15 – 20:

¹⁵ The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ 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 and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. ¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ 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.

Do you see it? All things – all things – all things. Everything. All things! That's why He is supreme. Jesus is the one through whom and for whom all things were created. You want to know why you exist? You were created for Christ's glory. Jesus is the eternal God who was before all things. He is the eternal God who has always been. He came in human flesh. Jesus is the sovereign God who holds together all things. How is God going to destroy the world one day? All He has to do is release His grip!

Therefore, Jesus has the supremacy in all things. God is redeeming and reconciling all things to Himself in Christ. Everything that has been broken by sin, God is reconciling and redeeming.

All creation is groaning, waiting for that day. It puts a whole new focus on the suffering we go through now. Why we go through things in this life and why the world is so broken. It isn't always going to be this way.

Romans 8:18-25 –

¹⁸ I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed [for this finished product to be done]. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. [All things are being redeemed in heaven and on earth.]

²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. [Don't you hear the groan of Christian people everywhere? Why is it like this? How much longer is it going to go on? When is there going to be a change? That collective groan is what creation is feeling under the effect and weight of sin, but we have a hope. The hope is Jesus.] ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

Paul told the Galatians (3:13-14):

¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole [or tree]. Christ did that work there for us." ¹⁴ He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles [to the nations] through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

That's why Paul told them (Colossians 1:21-23):

²¹ Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. ²² But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation— [for an old sinner like me, I got to tell you, that is very good news! Very good news!] ²³ if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel.

[You see, there is only one 'good news' and that is Jesus. Paul is telling them, if you abandon this, you're only proving that you never really believed it at all. If you don't see that you can't do this on your own and Jesus is the only one who can redeem you and He has paid that price to save you, then you're going back to trying to do this on your own works, and you're never going to make it. You're going to go back into the mess and be part of the problem.] verse 23 continued:

This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

Paul told the Romans (5:6-11):

⁶ You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person [people usually to see righteous people as stuck up and part of the problem], though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. [The world has a place for good people, just no righteous people!] ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

⁹ Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! ¹⁰ For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! ¹¹ Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Paul said (Colossians 1:13-14): "¹³ For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

Redemption is the deliverance from bondage by the payment of a ransom. Reconciliation means moving from being an enemy to a friend. That's what the word means. That ransom price was the body and blood of Jesus Christ, sacrificed on the cross.

That's why Jesus said, "This bread is my body and this cup is my blood, given for you. Therefore, as often as you eat it, remember Me." Remember Me, the one who is your redeemer.

Father, thank You for this reminder today, that You are reconciling all things – things on earth and things in heaven – through this redemption You've paid by the work of Jesus on the cross. I pray today, as we come to this table, that You will be worshipped, our minds will be renewed, our hearts will be changed, and we will remember. We will give You the honor and glory You deserve. We thank You, in Jesus' name, Amen.