

**Plenary: Public Worship and the Many Layers of Gospel-Shaped Reconciliation**  
College Chapel

Scripture passages (NRSV)

**Reconciliation between God and human beings:**

Paul to the Corinthians: "God reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" (II Cor. 5:18-19).

Paul to the Colossians: "Through Christ God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things. . . . And you, who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him" (1:20-22).

**Reconciliation is manifested in the church by the inclusion of both Jews and Gentiles:**

Paul to the Romans: "The gospel is the power of God for salvation, to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the justice of God is revealed through faith for faith" (1:16-17). There will be "glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality" (2:10-11). "The same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him" (10:12).

Paul to the Ephesians: God has made Jews and Gentiles "into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between them. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility" (2:14-16).

Paul to the Galatians: "In Christ Jesus," neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is faith working through love" (5:6).

Peter: "I truly understand, that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does justice is acceptable to him" (Acts 10:34-35).

**Reconciliation is manifested in the church by the inclusion of members of all natural and social groups:**

Jesus: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).

Peter on Pentecost, quoting the prophet Joel (Joel 2:28-29):

"In the last days it will be," God declares,  
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,  
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
and your young men shall see visions,  
and your old men shall dream dreams.

Even upon my slaves, both men and women,  
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;

and they shall prophesy. "(Acts 2: 14ff.)

Peter, interpreting his visionary trance: "God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does justice is acceptable to him" (Acts 10:34-35).

Paul to the Ephesians: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all. . . are one in Jesus Christ (3:28).

### **Reconciliation is manifested in the church by the love of members for each other**

John: "This is the message you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another" (I John 3:11).

Paul to the Romans: "Love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor" (12:10).

Paul to the Galatians: "The whole law is summed up in a single commandment: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (5:14).

### **Love takes the form of being united in a solidarity of empathetic grieving and rejoicing**

Paul to the Romans: "Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep" (12:15).

Paul to the Corinthians: "Care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it" (I Cor. 12:25-26).

Paul to the Galatians: "Bear one another's burdens; in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (6:2).

### **Love takes the form of repenting and forgiving**

Jesus: "If another disciple sins, you must rebuke the offender; and if there is repentance, you must forgive. And if the same person sins against you seven times a day, and turns back to you seven times and says, 'I repent,' you must forgive." (Luke 17-3-4).

Peter: "Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?"

Jesus: "Not seven times but, I tell you, seventy-seven times" (Matt. 18:21-22).

Jesus: "When you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift" (Matt. 5:23-24).

Paul to the Thessalonians: "Be at peace among yourselves. . . See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. Rejoice always" (I Thess. 5:13-16).

Paul to the Romans: "Do not repay anyone evil for evil. . . . If your enemies are hungry feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink. . . . Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (12:17-21).

*The Didache*: "On the Lord's day, . . . come together, break bread and hold Eucharist, after confessing your transgressions that your offering may be pure; but let none who has a quarrel with his fellow join in your meeting until they be reconciled, that your sacrifice be not defiled" (*Didache* XIV).

### **Reconciliation is manifested in the church by the abolition of all favoritism and partiality**

Opponents of Jesus: "Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality" (Matt. 22:16; Cf. Mark 12:14 and Luke 20:14).

Paul to the Corinthians: "When the time comes to [eat the Lord's Supper], each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk. Do you [not] show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing?" (I Cor. 11:21-22). "Let there be no divisions among you, but be united in the same mind and the same purpose" (I Cor. 11:21-22).

Paul to the Romans: "Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly" (12:16). Do not "pass judgment on your brother or sister"; do not "despise your brother or sister" (14:10). "Live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Jesus Christ, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Welcome one another, just as Christ has welcomed you" (15:5-7).

James: "My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favoritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ? For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, 'Have a seat here, please,' while to the one who is poor you say, 'Stand there,' or, 'Sit at my feet,' have you not made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonored the poor.... You do well if you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself. But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law" (2:2-8).

### **No partiality does not imply no recognition of differences**

Paul to the Corinthians: "There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone." To one is given "the utterance of wisdom," to another "gifts of healing," to another "prophecy," to another "various kinds of tongues," and so forth. "The body does not consist of one member but of many" (I Cor. 12: 4-14).

Paul to the Romans: "For in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us" (12:4-6).

### **No partiality does not imply no recognition of authority**

Paul to the Romans: pay "respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due" (13:7).

Peter: "For the Lord's sake accept the authority of every human institution, whether of the emperor as supreme, or of governors sent by him....As servants of God, live as free people; yet do not use your freedom as a pretext for evil. Honor everyone. Love the family of believers. Fear God. Honor the emperor" (I Peter 2:13-16).

#### **However....**

Children, obey your parents; but parents, do not "provoke" their children "lest they lose heart" (Colossians 3:21).

Wives, be subject to your husbands; but husbands, "love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:22-23; cf. Colossians 5:19).

Servants and slaves, submit to your masters; but masters, treat your servants and slaves "justly and fairly," for there is a master over you as well, namely, God (Ephesians 6).

Political subjects, honor and obey governmental authorities; but authorities, recognize that God has given you a task to which you are to submit (I Peter 2:14).

Everyone honor everyone.

**John Calvin on Eucharist and reconciliation:**

"The Lord also intended the Supper to be a kind of exhortation for us, which can more forcefully than any other means quicken and inspire us both to purity and holiness of life, and to love, peace, and concord. For the Lord so communicates his body to us that he is made completely one with us, and we with him. Now, since he has only one body, of which he makes us all partakers, it is necessary that all of us also be made one body by such participation. The bread shown in the Sacrament represents this unity. And it is made of many grains so mixed together that one cannot be distinguished one from another, so it is fitting that in the same way we should be joined and bound together by such great agreement of minds that no sort of disagreement or division may intrude.... We shall benefit very much from the Sacrament if this thought is impressed and engraved upon our minds: that none of the brethren can be injured, despised, rejected, abused, or in any way offended by us, without at the same time, injuring, despising, and abusing Christ by the wrongs we do; that we cannot disagree with our brethren without at the same time disagreeing with Christ; that we cannot love Christ without loving him in the brethren; that we ought to take the same care of our brethren's bodies as we take of our own, for they are members of our body; and that, as no part of our body is touched by any feeling of pain which is not spread among all the rest, so we ought not to allow a brother to be affected by any evil, without being touched with compassion for him" (*Inst.* 4.17.38).