

Solus Christus (part 2) Six Pictures of the Atonement in John Calvin (See Robert Peterson in *Knowing God and Ourselves* by David B. Calhoun).

Concerning the works of Christ, the Apostle John wrote, “**Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written**” (John 21:25). The same can be said of our topic today: In Christ Alone! Since he is the image, the radiance of God, in essence God, we cannot fathom ALL that He is and all that He has done. Last week, we focused on Luther’s doctrine of justification, which was a major departure from the Catholic Church. I wanted us to consider what we are “protesting” as Protestants. And I hope we saw that our salvation is found in Christ Alone, particularly that salvation is not grace plus, not faith plus, not Christ plus, other things such as the sacraments. And the righteousness that is said to be ours, is not our own. It is Christ’s righteousness, “reckoned” to us, “imputed” to us, placed into our bank account. And really that was the only point last week.

Well, it is interesting that in our internship we are reading through another reformer, John Calvin. And what we are reading has to do with the atonement. Atonement means “covering.” He doesn’t simply “give” us his righteousness, at least without accomplishing the mission to which God sent him, namely, death on the cross. With this in mind, I want to share 6 pictures of the atonement that will highlight the uniqueness of Christ (3 today, 3 next week).

1. Christ Alone is the 2nd Obedient Adam. In order to understand this truth, we must consider the 1st Adam. He was the pinnacle of God’s creation on the 6th day (followed by Eve). And God told Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply and He gave them authority over the earth. And only Adam and Eve were created in the image of God. And as they multiplied, and spread out and ruled over the earth, so would the image of God be reflected back to Him and his glory would spread. And at that time, they were obedient. They trusted God. They loved God. They delighted in his presence, etc. And really, God’s covenant with Adam was this: “**Obey me and live.**” And the day you disobey, you will surely die. And this is what happened, Eve was tempted by Satan, and she took the fruit and gave to her husband, the one who should have protected her from evil, and they both ate, which was sin against God. And, now, all of a sudden, the obedience required for unbroken relationship with God, was gone! Sin entered the world through Adam. And it has passed to all of us! Adam failed as our representative. As we saw last week, his “sin” is imputed (mysteriously passed) to all mankind (us). And we also are disobedient, like Adam, lacking the righteousness that a holy God requires.

Parents, when you tell you kids not to lie or you will punish them. What happens when they lie? Hopefully, you punish them. And then you move on. Why? Because the punishment fits the crime (hopefully). Satisfaction has come. In the same kind of way, God punished Adam and Eve. And it wasn’t simply kicking them out of the garden. God’s punishment was death and separation. And God was just in his punishment. And he could have sent them to hell forever and God would have been a just God. But he did not! In his mercy and his grace, as He spoke of Satan’s punishment, He also made a promise! Look at Gen. 3:15: “**I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your**

head, and you shall bruise his heel.” Through the seed (offspring) of the woman, God would one day send a deliverer, one who would come and take of Adam’s sin.

Now, turn with me to 1 Cor. 15:22: **“For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.”** Paul compares the first Adam with Christ, who is called the 2nd Adam. Now look at Rom. 5:12: **“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.”** Now verse 14: **“Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.”** Now look at vv. 18-21: **“Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. ¹⁹ For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. ²⁰ Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹ so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”**

Today, ONLY Christ did what Adam did not do, and what we can not do. He was obedient to God. In his motive (love for God) and in all his actions, he fulfilled God’s command to Adam and all his kin. And when Christ laid down his life on the cross as a sacrifice for sin, God received this sacrifice as good and holy. This is why Adam’s children will not work. Only in Christ! And we worship Him today as the most beautiful 2nd Adam.

2. Christ Alone Is Our Victor. We often sing the song, *“Victory in Jesus.”* Christ alone is victorious! And for those who believe in him, victory is given. And this victory is glorious! This past week I saw one of the best soccer games of the year. We were playing another team, pretty equal in talent. We tied them earlier in the year. And whoever won this game would be ranked 1st in the State for 2a private/Christian schools. And it was a great game. It was pretty close until the end where we came out on top 3-1. This game was especially exciting to me because Josiah scored all three goals (We could have done without the flip). Our team came out VICTORIOUS! And all of us know this feeling in some compacity whether we are playing childhood games or youth sports or watching our favorite team. And even if we aren’t sports fans, we have had victory in other ways, whether at work or school, or though some financial goal, or even as a country as we think to WW II.

But these victories do not compare to the victory we have in Jesus. Let me ask, *“What does it profit a man to gain the world and lose his soul?”* One of the points of this saying is this: There is nothing we can achieve in this life that compares to losing one’s soul. And this means to be separated from a holy God because of sin. What if Josiah’s team could play Brazil’s national team? Would they ever win, in a million years, in eternity? Not a chance! In the same way, Adam could never win back what he lost in the fall. You and I can never find ourselves on the winning side when it comes to our separation from God. We lose for eternity.

Let me share some pictures from the Bible about us. In Adam, we are slaves to sin. We are in bondage, chained to our sin nature. We are like Joseph, thrown into a pit by his brothers with no escape. In Eph. 2 Paul says we are corpses spiritually. We are “dead” in our trespasses and sins. Also in Eph. 2, Paul describes us (as Gentiles). He says: **“Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh . . . ¹² remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world”** (Eph. 2:11-12).

In and of ourselves we are separated from God for eternity. But, God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to overcome these insurmountable obstacles. And when we think of Jesus as victorious, we immediately think of the resurrection. And we should! But, we cannot overlook Christ’s life. He was obedient (as we’ve seen) where Adam (and us) were not. This means that when he laid down his life on the cross, his sacrifice was acceptable. It was a victorious sacrifice. Listen to Col. 2:13-15: **“And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.”** And, in his death he was victorious over the rulers and authorities of this world. Verse 15 says, **“He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.”**

It is very interesting to me reading Calvin’s Institutes on this point. Calvin spends quite a bit of time explaining his position on the Apostles’ Creed, one of the most important Confessions of Christian Orthodoxy. It says,

“I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from there he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. AMEN.”

He spends a lot of time on the phrase “descended into hell.” And there are lots of view on the meaning of this phrase. But, at the least, when we consider our punishment for sin, we must consider separation and hell. When we pay for our own sins, this is what we get. But, somehow, somehow, with Jesus’ death on the cross, He experienced hell and separation. Otherwise, his sacrifice would not have been victorious, and his death would not have been sufficient. And, after 3 days, He rose from the dead, conquering death. And after 40 days, he ascended to his rightful place in heaven, where He is reigning today. And through his birth, death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus is victorious. Col. 1:19-20 says, **“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.” This means there is nothing we can do but trust in his victory for us! As Luther said, “We are beggars,” always receiving from God what we do not have and what we need.

3. Christ Alone Is Our Legal Substitute. Christ is our substitute. And, he is the ONLY LEGAL substitute for sinners. The Bible tells us that the “blood Christ cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). In Matt. 26:28 Jesus says, “**this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.**” If the effect of Jesus death on the cross is that our sins are cleansed, that is, not imputed to us, not counting against us before a holy God, then it follows that God’s judgment was satisfied by that price. He was our legal substitute.

Since the fall, there has always been clear examples of substitution. Think about it. When Adam and Eve sinned against God and they realized they were naked, what happened. They tried to cover themselves with fig leaves. But God, used the skins of an animal to cover them. Though separated from God spiritually, they were covered by the skins of “another.” But, these skins could not cover their sins. The death of these animals was not enough.

I think of another substitute. After Cain killed Abel and was punished by God and left a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth,” God provided another son in his place, Seth. In Gen. 4:25 we read: “**And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said, God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel, for Cain killed him.**” Think about the sacrificial system of slaughtering animals. When the people sacrificed those animals for all those years they were saying, “*God, accept these animals in our place. We are sinners (not them) and we deserve to be killed on the altar.*” And, associated with this system of sacrifice was always the idea of a “substitution,” a “payment” for sin. And this system continued day after day, week after week, year after year. But, these “substitutes” were never enough. They were never meant to be sufficient, a true “legal” payment for sins.

Now, do you remember what John the Baptist said when he was baptizing and he saw Jesus walking beside the river? He said, “**Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.**” In this statement he elevates Jesus above all the sacrifices of the Law of Moses. You see, all those sacrifices in the OT were just pictures of the real sacrifice. They were fitting substitutes for their time, but only in preparation for the true “legal” substitute found in Christ. Heb. 9:11-12 says, “**But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) ¹² he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.**”

Now, notice vv. 23-26: “**Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. ²⁴ For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. ²⁵ Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, ²⁶ for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the**

foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”

Today, Christ Alone is our legal substitute. He is the ONE to which ALL the OT substitutes picture. He is the ONE Moses and the prophets waited for. Much of the world today still looks to the sacrifices of animals to cover their sins. But they will continue sacrificing until death itself takes the sacrifice. Though those animals do not sin and rebel against their creator, they are still not enough. Why? They are creatures. And all their sacrifices combined as a substitute will never be sufficient. Only God Himself can provide such a legal substitution. It must be a heavenly sacrifice!

Today, Christ Alone is the obedient 2nd Adam. Today Christ Alone is our victor. And, Christ Alone is our legal substitute. I hope that through these three truths, Christ will be just a little more beautiful to you today.