

Edith

, [#2]. In the morning he preached from 1 Peter 2.

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Date : -

Text : Colossians 1:19-23

Event: World Communion Service

Has R/R tape

Festo Kivengere - Garden Grove, CA

#1  
Thank you very much, Dr. Schuller, for those lovely words. And it is my privilege to be here again, this is not my first time, I have been here before. In the congregation my wife is sitting listening to me, and we were together here a number of years ago. Before I go on with the greetings, and sharing with you on this very lovely evening for the world communion service, I have been informed that there are some of our brethren outside in the cars, but I am not quite sure whether they are listening in, having not been used to this sort of experience, I wonder whether there are some listening outside there, (honk,) so that, (more honking, laughter). Thank you very much, that's beautiful, and it means there are some people outside there listening and sharing with us in this wonderful ministry together. I want to bring you greetings this evening, from Uganda which is my home country, and also East Africa in general. Because the ministry of our Lord and Saviour has taken one across barriers, territorial barriers, tribal barriers, racial barriers, and even denominational barriers. I bring you greetings from these people who love the Lord Jesus Christ, and who also belong to you, as you belong to them.

#2  
I want just to read a passage which I think is suitable for our evening today, from St. Peter's letter. The first letter of our apostle Peter, chapter two. And it is a beautiful passage, pardon, it's Colossians rather than Peter. I preached on Peter

this morning, that's why I referred to him. It is Colossians chapter 1, and I want to read you a few verses, about only three verses from this passage in the light of our communion this evening. Especially I want you to remember that this passage is addressed to us in our world. I am sure you are aware the kind of world we live in outside this beautiful sanctuary. That outside the peace we are enjoying there are conflicts in the world, even as we are gathering now, that lives are being lost even as we gather in the peace and protection, and security of this wonderful country of yours. But outside in God's world, all is not well. All is not yet intergrated, all is not at peace. Suffering is rampant. Men's hearts are breaking. We know situations where a church like this would be three quarters widows, and husbands are not to be found because they have lost their lives in the confusion of the world.

#3 And so we read this passage, a very historic passage for an evening like today. And very practical indeed. And here is St. Paul writing these lovely words which I want to read to you. "Christ exists before everything else. And everything else holds together in Him." The church of which you are members, is His body, and He is the head. Which means, co-ordination, intergration comes to the body simply because He is the head. He is the beginning, for He was the first to return from the dead, the Victor, the conqueror, which means that there is no part of the universe in which the topmost place is not His. "For by God's own decision, God in all His completeness made His home in Him," in Christ. More. "It was God's decision to effect

through Him an act of universal reconciliation to Himself, of everything in heaven and on the earth. And it was through His death of the cross that God did bring the whole universe into a right relationship with Himself."

#4 May God add His blessing to these wonderful words from the epistle. Now, the uniqueness of this evening. The uniqueness of our experience here can be put in the simple words in the New Testament, as you heard St. Paul putting it, the centrality of Jesus Christ as the one who is at the bottom, the foundation of the universe. As the only one in whom the universe and all who inhabit it cohere, or are held together. In Him, not only cohesion, because it is not just that there is a foundation, the basis of life in Jesus Christ, which means, apart from Christ everything remains fluid. Nothing is stable. Everything in the universe remains absolutely unpredictable until He becomes the foundation as He was meant to be. And then it goes on, the foundation alone is not enough. There is cohesion. Things holding together, or things falling apart. And we know from experience that since Adam, the first representative of the human race, lost his bearings, lost his boundaries of destiny within which he could be completely free. For freedom is meaningless, in fact, it is shattering to have freedom without boundaries of destiny. There must be boundaries within which freedom is meaningful, is life building.

#5 Adam lost that, and lost his bearing and direction, and from that time on we have all experienced that life is breaking apart all the time. That life has tended to disintegrate repeatedly, that homes break, that life itself keeps on breaking. That we

build structure and then they break when we expect them to hold together. We've seen this in Africa, life breaking again and again, even after we had received our independence politically, we discovered that we became means by which we broke that which we wanted to build. The very freedom one claims, one smashes that freedom, because freedom can only be freedom within the context of God's set destinies. But most of us, like Adam, have tended to want to run on our own, to declare our own independence, to run our lives and become the very terms of reference for living.

#6 And you know, my dear friends this evening, as we are representatives of our world, of our communities, of our social settings, we all know by experience that it is simply impossible for the human life to hold together, for society to hold together, until again we are reclaimed, or redeemed, or restored back. Again and again in my country you hear stories of bloodshed, tribal conflicts, family conflicts, racial conflicts between white and black, white and black. Languages. Yes, humanity has continually experienced . . . now, you hear on your radio, Arabs and Israelites fighting, and yet they all come from the same ethnic group. They all come from exactly the same background of history and origin, and yet they are breaking in conflict, and they are not the only ones. As I said, we have experienced this breaking apart in my own country. Breaking apart, and we use all kinds of excuses, of course, we say we are breaking apart because the colours are different. Some men are white, some <sup>men</sup> are black. Some are brown, others are yellow. I suppose there may be some other green ones somewhere. And so we say, because the colours are different, therefore

we can't help breaking apart. We say, "We are disentergrating simply because our cultural backgrounds are different. Our languages are different." And then we shift this even into christian communities. "I belong to a particular group." "Yes, I come from an Anglican background, he comes from a Lutheran background, he is a Baptist in background, and therefore, we can't see eye to eye, therefore, we fall apart."

#7 May I suggest here, the reason, or the cause, the problem is fundamentally one. I remain unpredictable until you see me in Jesus Christ. You simply cannot discover who I am until you find me in Him who picked me up, put my broken life together, and out of the broken pieces brought a man. I am a miracle, and so are you. We are miracles of grace. Only the wounded hands, as we are going to remember this evening, the wounded hands could bring wounded humanity together. Only the bleeding heart of the Son of God could produce cohesion where there was disentergration. And this is the miracle of the New Testament message. That's why it is good news. Why is Jesus good news? Because, you see, He says in Luke chapter 4:18, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for I have been annointed to preach good news to the poor, to give sight to the blind, to take captives and release them to live, to the oppressed to experience liberty, and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." That's why He came. No wonder He is good news for broken humanity.

#8 And may I say, as St. Paul was putting it here, 'Foundation of life only in Jesus Christ.' He was there before everything ever was. Not only that, cohesion in life, humanity tohold together,

it needs two mighty hands to draw, and draw, and draw until men meet upon His loving chest. For He said, "And I, when I am lifted above the earth on a cross, I shall draw all men together." The blacks, the whites, the yellows, the rich, the poor, the educated, the uncultured, all drawn with those mighty arms of love.

#9 Let me just tell you, this continually happens when Christians experience the redeeming act. I am standing here as a witness of that redeeming act. Once alone in the outside, broken up, corroded, tired, sinful, rebellious, who on earth could have reached me except one who was wounded for me? And that's how He reached me. He knew me when I was standing in the cold alone. He knew me when things like waves were breaking upon my poor life, and I was just being shattered. One wave after another. One tornado after another. I was becoming a victim of life, and yet He created me that life may become a joy to me, a feast, a celebration. Let me tell you, my dear friends, if you have never known what happened on Calvary, was God putting broken men and women together, and it cost Him blood, and sweat, and nakedness. He put His blessed hands into the mess of humanity, and out of the mess He created a new humanity called the church. The church is a miracle, it is a new community. And what did He do? St. Paul puts it beautifully. "More. It was God; God's decision to effect through Him an act of a universal reconciliation to Himself." That means, bringing a hostile universe back into friendship with Himself. That means bringing men hostile to Him, back into sonship, back as children. These prodigals of humanity. And then, cleaning them, restoring them, filling them, healing them, and sending them

out.

#90 Maybe you think I am just using lovely words. No, no. The cross was not lovely. The cross was a realistic approach of God to humanity. Outside the city, a man hanging there in blood and sweat, in utter loneliness and weakness, what does that mean? It means here you have got a portrait of humanity. Broken up, lonely, bewildered, tired, ashamed, guilty, and those outstretched arms embracing such a world, slowly, gently, steadily, until the world found itself upon the chest of the Son of God. And when that happens, I tell you, out of that broken humanity you see miracles coming out. The other day, in my country, in a particular part south of my country, in a confusion of politics, hatreds, and murderers, and killings, and all that kind of stuff which we experience once in a while, as the history of humanity tells us. One man was caught in it, among many men. He had no reason to be caught in it, he didn't have any part to play, except that he was a human being, and because you are human so you are always caught in human confusion. It doesn't, you don't have to play a big part, you don't have to write it up, but simply because you are a human being, once in a while you get caught up in it, you can't escape.

#10 The Lord Jesus was caught up in it. This young man, whom I can never forget, was caught in it. Others had already been caught in it in my country of Uganda. On this particular occasion, this young man in a school with students, in this political confusion, the claim was, "If you belong to that particular group you are not wanted here. We are going to eliminate you." And those who were,



who had authority came to eliminate those whom they didn't like. The same old story. And they did eliminate some students in this particular place, and they faced a young man, a young teacher with the claim, "You too are going to be eliminated." And he looked at them with that steady look which only Jesus can produce. With that ability to cope with a situation which is completely out of hand. He did not have any gun in his hands. He did not have a grenade. He did not have any weapon whatsoever, but he possessed the greatest weapon that Jesus gives to men. And he stood and he looked at people who were his enemies, or who thought they were. And he said to them, "Before you remove this life, give me permission to tell you three things." And they said, "Say on." And he said, "One. I love you." Do you realise that as you come forward here this evening, that is a confession you want to make tonight? Do you realise that in the broken bread, and in the cup telling you the shed blood, you stand and you listen heaven, to heaven saying, "I love you."

#12 And that young man stood before guns, and he looked at men with their fingers on the triggers of their guns to remove his body, and with a steady, calm, a reproduction of Calvary, he said, "I love you." Do you know what that means? The second, "I love my country, I am not a betrayer. And third, may I sing you a song before you kill me?" And he sang four stanzas of a hymn which you perhaps know, in his mother tongue. "Out of my bondage, sorrow and sin, Jesus I come. Jesus I come." One stanza after another, ending each stanza with those lovely words, "Jesus I come, Jesus I come." And as he sang each stanza it was as if he was being lifted

higher and higher, and closer and closer to Him. Another Steven, you say? Yes. And when he finished the four, hands down, and he said to the men, "Alright, now you can do your job." For a little moment, a silence. A paralysis in the hands of those men. For I don't believe they hated him, they were simply carrying on a job, that's all. They did not hate him personally.

#13 Now I want to ask you, do you see what happens? Do you see the meaning of the words I just read to you? It was through His death, the death of Christ on the cross, that God did bring the whole universe into a right relationship with Himself. And do you see this man there? Here is the holy communion of the first kind. Here is a man reenacting what happened on the cross of Calvary. Who is in command? The eliminators, or the eliminated? Who is in power? Who has got life at that particular time? Who possesses the ability in that situation? Not the killer. (end side A)