BC art. 13; Col 1:15-20; John 5:12-17; The Providence of God I. Creation Sustained II. Creation Reclaimed

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, luck, chance and fate are common works in our language. It seems that everyone believes in the luck of the stars or that they are destined for a certain fate. But as Christians, we have the good news of belonging to a God who not only made but also sustains us! Our God not only created the world, but He continues to rule over it in such a way that His good purpose and end will be met. As we saw in creation, the Father spoke and called all things into existence. But God did not, as the deist would claim, wind up the world and let it go. He is not watching from a distance as things carry on. No, our God remains actively involved in the day to day working of creation. So today we are going to consider what is called the Providence of God. As you will remember, providence is the almighty, ever present power of God by which all things are ruled and sustained. Where we normally focus on the heavenly Father who cloths the grass of the field and feeds the birds of the air, today we are going to be focusing on the work of the Son in our providential care. So we consider this theme: Jesus Christ sustains the world as He brings about reconciliation.

**I. Creation Sustained**

In our first point we find that Jesus Christ is the one by whom all things are sustained. Our reading from Col. 1:17 states, by Him all things hold together. So not only were all things made through and for Him, He is the one who holds everything that has been made together. All things abide- they stand and remain together by Him and through His work. Jesus is like a composer who takes the notes and blends them together into the song of creation sustained. He is the divine glue if you will, the gravity by which we are kept together and on the ground. If Jesus were not present and active, we would all fly off the face of the earth! You will remember that in the beginning, God brings order and structure. For God is the God of order. Well, Jesus keeps this order in creation. Without the continued work of Jesus in this regard, our world would devolve into darkness and death! So Jesus holds it all together and stops everything from coming apart at the seams. There would be only chaos and disintegration if not for the work of Jesus. Great and small, He cares for them all. We might sometimes forget that Jesus is continuing to work today. As we are reminded in John 5- the Father has been working since creation and the Son is also working. When Jesus finished His redemptive work of suffering and dying, that did not mean that He was done with all work! When Jesus said that it was finished, He did not mean that He was finished working! Sitting at the Father’s right hand is not a position of sloth or inactivity! NO! Jesus is working- He continues to pour out His grace and Spirit- He continues to intercede for His people- and He continues to hold the world together. So the laws of creation are really the laws of the King of King! The normal passing of seasons, the production of food and the falling of rain- are the direct effect of Jesus’ continued reign!

Yet, as necessary as it is for Jesus to hold all things together, there is a specific focus in our text on His work of providing for and protecting His people. Yes, it is true the creation in general enjoys the sustaining work of the Son. But Col. 1:18 puts a particular focus on the work of Jesus in holding everything together for sake of His body, the bride! In other words, the church is squarely the focus of Jesus continued sustaining work! Jesus is said to be the head of the body. Yes, Jesus is the Lord over all creation- yes He has all creatures under His rule! He does have the name above all names and every knee will bow! He does hold all power and rulers in His hand! But He is uniquely said to be the head of the church! Specifically, this means that His rule over creation and preservation of this world ultimately serves the good of His bride! Working all for the good of those who love Him! He sustains creations for the benefit of His people! He holds the earth together so that His people might be brought forth. To put this another way, one of the key reason that this world continues is so that the church might have a context in which to grow! The world is held together for the sake of the people of God! If He cares for and holds together all of creation- is He unable or unwilling to care for and provide for His own body? It is clear, then, as Art. 13 puts it, He will not abandon us! Our loving husband will not forsake us, His bride! Our heavenly head will not forget about us, His body! He knows what we need and H will protect us from the Evil One. No enemy or weapon of man can remove us from His loving care! Nothing can happen to us apart from His good plan and purpose! There is such comfort and peace in this truth! Nothing can snatch us as sheep from our Good Shepherd! Nothing can surprise or undermine the God who rules over all! No sickness or famine can undo or hinder His plan! Jesus is the pillar upon which this world stands! And this pillar is our loving husband!

**II. Creation Reclaimed**

But there is more to this story! Not only is Jesus the one who is sustaining creation, He is also the one who is reclaiming creation as well! As our passage continues in v. 20; God is reconciling all things to Himself through Christ! Through Him everything is going to be reconciled. Now to reconcile is to bring peace- reconciliation is to bring back to a former state of harmony. The fact is, this world is out of harmony- things are out of order. But Jesus is bringing order back! He is bringing peace to this world- making peace by way of His blood. Note that this reconciliation is said to apply to all things- things in heaven and things on earth. In other words, this reconciliation is to be applied to everything. Nothing is outside the view and scope of this reconciliation. And it is a peace that is brought by way of His shed blood. The benefits of Christ work on the cross are not limited to the saving of the elect, but also contains benefits for the creation itself. To say this another way, there is a universal scope to this reconciliation. Not that all men will be saved- but rather- all creation will be reconciled! Everything that has been created will enjoy the fruit of the Savoir work! When Adam rebelled, creation itself fell into bondage along with humanity. There were foreign agents and traitors introduced to this good creation. Thorns and thistles now abound- hostility, conflict and death now abound. Sin polluted our heart and polluted creation. But this will be dealt with! To put this in the words of Issaih 11, the wolf will dwell with the lamb, the calf and the lion will dwell together- the lion shall eat straw like the ox. None shall hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD. We sometimes forget that the work of Jesus Christ has creational impact. Jesus is and will make all things new! The cross is not only the pivotal point in the salvation of mankind, it is also the pivotal point in cosmic history! Creation itself is looking forward to this day! The world that our Lord Jesus is preserving today is the same world that He will reconcile on the final day! Not only is creation being held together, this same creation is eagerly waiting for the day when it will be fully reconciled again! As Rom. 8:19 puts, creation groans as in labor- waiting for what will be revealed! Our world itself is longing for Jesus to come back and lift off the chains of sins and death! As Rom. 8 continues, the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God! The reconciliation and peace that we now experience in our hearts- will not only be applied to our bodies at the resurrection, but this reconciliation and peace will be applied to all things- things on earth and in the heavens. Or as the book of Revelation puts it- there will be a new heaven and a new earth- for the Son is making all things news. Ther will be no more weeping, no more sorrow and no more death! This does not just apply to humanity- but to all creation! All pain, sickness, and death will be removed. No more thorns and thistles- no more sweat filled labor and struggle. Famines, floods, fires, earthquakes and all wars will cease! No more bloodshed in humanity and in the animal kingdom- no more rebellion in the spiritual realm. All will be reconciled to God! All made good, right and new- all will be at peace! Not only did God create the heavens and the earth good- by the Son the heaven and earth will be made good again when the heavenly Jerusalem comes down and God dwells with man once again! Jesus will continue to preserve and hold this created world order together until the time comes when He will make it anew! He makes all things beautiful in His time! Jesus will not leave anything to chance! He will hold this world together until it is time to make all things right! The Prince of Peace will bring peace on earth and to this earth! Our God not only preserves by way of His providence, He also will renew all that He now preserves.

Now this is the good news that we all long to hear. It seems like there are new threat to this world and new enemies to the church every day. A giant meteorite, Artificial Intelligence, a respiratory virus, global economic meltdown, jihadist, nuclear war- the list goes on! And Yet- God is still the ruler and Jesus sits on the throne! Providence is not an independent power- but rather providence is the work of God to preserve and provide. The Father created all through Jesus and continues to hold it together with His hands. Our Lord and Savior is head of the church, and He holds creation together until the time of resurrection arrives! Fear not! He brings reconciliation and peace- so be of good cheer! Your God holds all things in His hands!