“Mr. Moderator, Your Goat”, is the line in a made-up-on-the-spot liturgy in Kenya by an elder friend of mine by the name of Henri Rush when presented with an immediate and pressing dilemma. We were in attendance at the dedication ceremony of a new church building in the central rift valley in Kenya that the church I was then serving had given the money to build. It was quite a joyous festive occasion and our mission team was seated up in the chancel area as events unfolded. Finally, the head man of the local Masai tribe came forward with a goat and made an elaborate presentation to Henri in thanks for our help in rebuilding the church. In Kenya the elders are given the greater honor over pastors and are the real leaders of their congregations. And Henri certainly fit the part. He was six two, with a great mane of flowing white hair; he was recently retired from being the chief counsel for the Interstate Commerce Commission in DC, and in his retirement I had offered him the job of Director of International Mission for $1 per year! Henri’s love and passion was Africa. So this Masai head man presented this goat to Henri and then asked quite casually, “Do you want to take it with you or do you want us to cut it up on the spot?” I watched as our entire mission team, myself included, recoiled in horror thinking we were all about to witness a terrible sight. But Henri devised on the spot an elaborate ceremony, and said we were very honored by the presentation of the goat, but that we wanted to re-present the goat to the Moderator of Elburgon Presbytery, to pass on the gift, if you will. This was deemed acceptable. And Henri with great aplomb and ceremony handed the reins of the goat to the Moderator, saying: “Mr. Moderator, your goat!” Much relief and applause for all assembled.

So what does this have to do with anything today or what we are currently facing in our nation? What does this have to do with our Bible verse for today from Colossians, Colossians 1: 17, “In Him (in Christ) all things hold together.”?

There are three basic tribal groups in Kenya –the Kikuyu (the most numerous who are also mostly Presbyterian), the Kalogen, and the Masai. The politicians in Kenya would stir up the rivalries amongst the various tribal groups in order to remain in power. Divided people can be controlled and manipulated. But a unified populace just might throw the rascals out. So a couple years before my arrival there the politicians had stirred up the tribal rivalries in what was referred to as “The Tribal Clashes”. There were great riots and much barbarity, much of it directed toward the Kikuyu (mostly Presbyterian) by the Kalogen (the tribe of the President of Kenya). In this town in Kenya the Kalogen rioted and gathered outside the Presbyterian Church and burned it down. They also burned down the manse and were about to lynch the Presbyterian Pastor. No matter how tough it has ever been in ministry no one has gathered a lynch mob to string me up; I suppose that’s an accomplishment! So the angry bloodthirsty lynch mob is about to kill the Pastor and a Kalogen man intervenes. At great personal risk to himself, he says they must not have the blood of this innocent Pastor on their hands and that God would punish them if they did. So they stopped and the Pastor’s life was spared.

So I now segue way us back to the celebration and dedication of the new church building. Because now we get to meet the Kalogen man who saved the Pastor who is now a member of the formerly all Kikuyu Presbyterian Church. Oh, and by the way, now there are Kalogen members of the church as well as Masai members of the church as well as Kikuyu members of the church. All three tribes are represented. Each tribal group does a special dance and presentation as part of the ceremony. There is much joy, not only because of the new building, but also because the church people themselves are brand new. There are no longer THREE tribes; they are now ONE TRIBE and that tribe is Christian. In Christ, all the tribal
rivalries, all the divisions that pitted neighbor against neighbor are gone. Christ is all, in all. They are ONE in the Spirit and they are ONE in the Lord. God has done a new thing, a great thing, and former enemies are now brothers and sisters and friends. That’s what we witnessed that Sunday in Kenya. We witnessed the reconciliation God can do through His Son Jesus Christ to a nation divided by its politicians but unified by its SAVIOR. Hearts must be spiritually changed and filled with Jesus. Reconciliation can be had only in the person of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!!!! This is the truth America must fully grasp today!

Our scripture verses from Colossians say that “in HIM (in Christ) all things hold together”. (Colossians 1:17) There is a very basic and profound spiritual principle here. Christ is the glue that holds us close to God. Jesus is the cement which cements a church together and makes it spiritually strong. “Apart from me”, says Jesus, “you can do nothing.” (John 15:5) With Christ there is nothing that cannot be done. Without HIM everything blows apart. “With God all things are possible.” (Matthew 19:26) The spiritual presence of the Lord Jesus Christ is also the tie that binds our nation together. Our founders were people of prayer and in reliance on God they desperately prayed and God intervened, and England, the greatest power in the world at that time, was defeated by a tiny struggling Continental Army. Freedom and peace and prosperity were the results of those prayers and that faith and the times of Spiritual Awakening and Re-awakening that followed. We have what we have today because of their prayers and sacrifice; and the renewed sacrifice of many men and women over more than 200 years. But it is Christ who has held us together. “He is our peace”. (Ephesians 2:14) Without Him as our Prince of Peace there will be no peace. I am sure by now you must have observed what I have observed—that as the churches have shut down, as worship and prayer and study and mission have been silenced, the divisions have gotten worse and worse, and we are daily plunging into the dark abyss of chaos. Less Christ, more chaos. No church, no glue. All that we love is in the process of being dismantled and destroyed. Without CHRIST that is the necessary result. Without the spiritual glue which holds us together that is what will happen; we devolve into destructive tribal clashes. We are seeing the fruit of a society that has turned its back on the Almighty.

But our hope is in the Lord. And that is why we may not despair but always have hope in HIM. Our scripture from Colossians notes: “In HIM (in Christ) all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and THROUGH HIM to reconcile to himself all things...making peace by the blood of His cross.” (Colossians 1:19-20) Spiritually speaking, when we are spiritually connected to HIM, and He is in us and through us and around us through the presence of the Holy Spirit, then HE will reconcile all things in Himself. First we must be reconciled to HIM and then we can be reconciled to one another. First HE must be preeminent in our heart and life and only then can HE bring reconciliation to our world. And HE makes this peace and HE brings this reconciliation through the blood of His cross. He has paid the price of death and shed blood and when we turn to Him then we do not have to devolve into chaos, destruction, death, civil war and tribal clashes but HE can reign in the human heart and bind all our hearts into ONE! IN HIM ALL THINGS HOLD TOGETHER. ONLY IN HIM. ONLY THROUGH HIM. ONLY IN JESUS CAN DIVISION BE HEALED AND RECONCILATION COME. IN HIM ALONE!!!! That is why His church is essential.

With this I conclude. It has been a great joy to me to reconnect with a young man I met in Kenya during those mission trips. His name is Wilson Kamau. I was so impressed with him when I was there I called him “the Apostle Paul in waiting in Kenya”. He had a command of scripture; he preached and spoke brilliantly; even as a young man, a man of spiritual discernment and prayer. And when we reconnected this past December imagine my joy to discover that his life’s work and calling is to head up a non-profit in Kenya dedicated to healing the nation, to averting the tribal clashes, to bringing spiritual reconciliation through Jesus Christ to the people of Kenya. Our hope is that the Lord will raise up men
and women like Wilson for us in our society. Our hope is that like that kind Kalogen man people will intervene and at great personal risk stop the violence and evil in our society as well. Our hope, as always, is in the Lord Jesus Christ. Because certainly we all know by now that only HE can intervene and only His love and His blood and His cross can bring the reconciliation we so desperately need. Don’t ever believe the lie that the church of Jesus Christ is somehow non-essential. No, it is here for the healing of the nations, to bring peace through the Prince of Peace by the power of His blood, and to bring people together, one, unified, inseparable in HIM. Because, beloved, in the end, only HE can hold all things together. Amen and Amen.

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IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!