

How do we heal a broken relationship with God?

It is often repeated that it is through Jesus' death on the cross
But I want us to take a closer look at that

First, God takes the initiative and comes all the way to us

*The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. John 1:9 NRSV
And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a
father's only son, full of grace and truth. John 1:14 NRSV*

Western theology has focused on an abstract legal theory to explain the meaning of the cross

This understanding has influenced our reading of Scripture and our view of God
It shifts focus from the resurrection to the crucifixion
The theory sees sin as a violation of justice and the cross as an appeasement of God's wrath
God becomes judge—meeting out judgment against humans—rather than a God of love

But a much better view of understanding how God redeems humanity is the "family" not the court room

God the Father—Jesus the son—the Holy Spirit
—and we are adopted into the family as children of God
God is a loving God who yearns to be reconciled with all people everywhere

How does the cross bring about healing of relationships between God and humanity?

Truth: the cross is not about reconciling God to humanity—but reconciling humanity to God
It is a lie that God cannot look on sinners
*But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.
Romans 5:8 NRSV*

In fact, Jesus eats with sinners and allows sinners to touch him
Prophet Hosea demonstrates God's desire to be in a loving relationship

The legal theory of the cross makes it sound as if God sent Jesus to die—demanding someone pay for sin

The story of Pilate, the religious leaders demanding death, and the Romans—all become agents
They are necessary agents to enact this death of Jesus so he could pay for our sins
In that scenario, Jesus' death appeases God's wrath

But Jesus is God's beloved son in whom he is well pleased

In John 14, Jesus explains that he and the Father are one and whoever has seen him sees God
In Jesus' suffering, we see the pain of the Father
The cross demonstrates the compassion of God the Father

The crucifixion was a scandal and killed an innocent man

In submitting to that, Jesus didn't run from evil and all that evil threw at him
Rather, Jesus submitted to the worst that this broken world could offer
He allowed himself to be misunderstood, slandered, convicted unjustly, and executed
In dying, Jesus took all of the brokenness of the world into himself
Jesus absorbs all the hurt our sins have caused
Yet, he responds, "*Father forgive them, for they do not know what they do.*" Luke 23:34
God simply loves through the suffering of the cross

But the miracle of the cross—is that God did not stay dead
The cross killed him—but it could not hold him
Jesus triumphed over death and returned to life
In so doing, Jesus triumphed over sin and evil

Evil lost in the ultimate conflict
In dying and rising again—Jesus broke the power of sin forever
In dying and rising again—Jesus enacted forgiveness over all people everywhere
In that sacrifice, we are offered healing and grace to restore us to relationship with God
Jesus' death was not punishment for our sins
It was an act of solidarity with us that frees and transforms us
God in Jesus fully submitted to the human experience—even in fully dying
He became one with us in his life, death and resurrection to bring about healing and salvation

God became human for us and took it to the ultimate end
In so doing, God redeemed humanity
We live forgiven and free—as freed people, we are welcomed fully as children of God
Death and sin have no hold over us
Jesus' ultimate sacrifice of love on the cross was not about reconciling God to humanity
—but reconciling humanity to God

As reconciled persons, we are covenant partners with God, enacting God's work in our world