

June 14, 2020

Romans 5:6-15

“Christ Died For Us!”

Pilgrim Lutheran Church  
2155 North Oakland Ave.  
Decatur, Illinois 62526

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Reconciliation! A very interesting word. Reconciliation is a word that we use in our day that is close to the way in which it was used in Biblical times. It means that enemies change into being friends. The Scripture speaks of God and sinful humanity as enemies. An enemy is someone who is hostile toward another and seeks to use and abuse, injure, overthrow, and even destroy him or her. We have made God into our enemy. Our hostility is seen in our rebellion which is both inclination and action that is opposed to who God is and his will for us. We see it in the way we view and treat God and others.

True love cares for the self for the sake of another. We see that in the holy Trinity. False love cares for the self for the sake of oneself. This is what we now see in fallen humanity. When one cares for the self for the sake of another there is the attempt to preserve all. When one cares for the self for the sake of oneself then everyone else becomes expendable and are subject to being used, abused, injured, dominated, and subject to destruction. True love is about relationships that are kept in principled love that always seeks the well being and preservation of another. True love follows the rules of relationships. False love is about relationships where everyone is looking out for “good ole number one.” False love seeks out others to exploit and is more than willing to break principled love for self-preservation and self-fulfillment. False love breaks the rules of relationships.

True love and false love don't get along. False love is hostile toward true love. They are enemies. All of the commandments of Scripture are about truly loving relationships. They are either about our relationship with God or with one another. Following the commandments is about love for another. Bending or breaking the commandments is about love for oneself. Ever since the fall into sin people have been alienated from God and from one another. We just can't seem to get connected in the way that will bring true peace and lasting contentment. If who God is and his will for me conflicts with who I am and my will for me and others, then how can the two ever really meet? For that matter, if we cannot even connect with who God is and his loving will for us, then how can we ever expect to really be connected to one another and at peace? Every commandment we break attacks and defames God as well as other people around us, and that is not okay.

We must not think to ourselves that a Biblical phrase like “the wrath of God” is just a figure of speech that we can ignore. All who love the self for self's sake will feel that there is something wrong, unless they have suppressed those feelings. It says in Romans (1:18) that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.” God is not impressed with those who are opposed to true love. The two cannot get along. People today are thinking that we need to accept what ought not to be done as normal - calling good, evil and evil, good. That isn't going to fly before the who is and always will be - who is love and loving. Again, it says in Romans (1:32), “Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.”

With all of these things before us, you have to begin to wonder if there is any hope. With such opposition against God, with people being filled with unrighteousness as they are, is it possible for God

and humanity to be reconciled? Is it possible for God and humanity to be friends and at peace? The answer is “Yes.” But here is the caveat, or the warning of tough requirement. It is only when the root cause of the hostility is identified and dealt with that there can be genuine reconciliation. Our false love of self for the sake of oneself must die and be daily kept dead at the cross. There is no other path to true love. The dividing wall of hostility must crumble that we may be embraced by God’s love through his one and only Son Jesus Christ and the forgiveness of sins. Reconciliation can only come from him alone.

**Christ Died For Us!** Paul writes that he died while we were “weak/helpless,” incapable of good, incapable of response. We were “ungodly” when his love sought us out. In other words, we did not even want God’s love. Still, at the right time, at the time of our utmost desperation and at the extreme of our rebellion **Christ Died for Us!** Paul says that he died for us “while we were still sinners,” a people in revolt against God, still holding on to an utter contempt of God who is good and gives every good gift. To mark this incredible love of God the apostle Paul adds this. He writes, “Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life (Rom. 5:9-10).”

Again, **Christ Died For Us!** The concept of Reconciliation is one of those words in Scripture that capture all that God has so graciously done for us in Jesus Christ alone. To paraphrase the great Lutheran theologian, Francis Pieper:

Christ effected the reconciliation of all men with God. God does not wait for men to reconcile with Him by efforts of their own. In the death of Jesus, God became reconciled. As Christ’s death lies in the past, from our standpoint, so also our reconciliation is an accomplished and absolute fact. It was God who laid his anger on his Son at the cross before we were born. In his heart, God has forgiven the sins of the whole world. In the resurrection of Jesus, we behold the absolution of the whole world of sinners, as it says in Romans 4:25, “[Jesus] who was raised again for our justification.” We have been objectively declared free from sin (Pieper, II, p. 348).

All those who by grace believe in this objective reconciliation have entered into a friendly relationship with God and are at peace, where before there had been alienation and hostility. Our sin, our hostility has been forgiven. With Martin H. Franzmann we can say:

The past is the history of God’s unparalleled love; the future is the full assurance of love’s last reach, the great deliverance from the judgment. No suffering can make of the present a gray and deadly stretch with no meaning and no joy of its own. The present is filled with rejoicing; we exult in the God who in our Lord Jesus Christ has lifted up His countenance upon us and gives us peace.

That little word “peace” is quite the word. Peace is even more than an announcement that our hostility toward God is over. It points to being whole or complete, which is declared of us now but what

we look forward to in its fullness in the kingdom of glory. In Christ, we have everything and look forward to what is messed up in this life being made entirely right in the age to come. So, in this time, peace not only means that we are no longer enemies of God in the forgiveness of sins, but it is also connected to the repairing of other relationships that have been shattered. Reconciliation between God and us is necessary in order to have reconciliation between us and others in this life (even if it is still tainted by sin). The heart of our message is reconciliation in the forgiveness of sins through Jesus. There is no other message than Christ crucified. And, as our own personal reconciliation with God came through forgiveness, so will the healing of other fractured relationships come through forgiveness.

When it comes to brothers and sisters in Christ, our Savior says, “So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift (Matt. 5:23-24).” And when it comes to those who are presently outside the church, our Lord says (Matt. 5:44-46), “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have?”

In the public ministry, God has made his pastors representatives who proclaim reconciliation. In private life he has given every child of God the message of reconciliation. God is making his appeal through us to a hostile world. We implore all to be reconciled to God through the forgiveness of sins through Christ, and to be reconciled with one another. When we do this it is as if God has visited them. We implore all to be reconciled to one another through Jesus who became sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God. **Christ Died For Us!** Beautiful words aren't they? Only through Jesus is there reconciliation with God and with one another. Only in Jesus can the enmity and hostility of the world be truly addressed now and forever!

Amen.

Pastor Brock Abbott