

“The Big Words of the Bible: Reconciliation”

Romans 5.6-11

Lenten Midweek 4, 2006

The Word of God for our sermon meditation this evening is recorded in the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans, the 5th chapter, verse 6-11 as read earlier.

Most of us, I imagine, are familiar with conflict resolution. The point of conflict resolution is to bring about reconciliation between two conflicted parties, a friendlier interaction between those who are on unfriendly terms. Whether in the church, in marriage, friendships, the workplace and more, we all prefer to have everyone on friendly terms with each other. It is in the spirit of unity, harmony, and even productivity that people work for reconciliation in every area of human relationships.

Many times the two parties can work out the terms of reconciliation for themselves as they compromise and negotiate terms and parameters that are agreeable to both. However, in some cases, a mediator is often required in order to initiate the reconciliation sorely needed by those involved in the conflict. We see this to be the order of the day, for instance, with Union and Labor contract talks, with marital counseling, and other arenas of life.

The Holy Scriptures teach that as sinners we are in need of reconciliation with God in heaven. We, too, needed to be placed on friendlier terms with God because, as Paul points out in our sermon reading for tonight, we are not only ungodly by nature, but we are actually God's enemies. In other words, it is more than just a strained relationship we have with God as sinners. It is an out-and-out hostility, enmity, and warfare with God. Nothing, because of our sin and rebellion, was well with God. There was no friendliness but only wrath and displeasure from God toward us.

Ever since the fall into sin, ever since the moment of our conception in our mother's womb, we have needed reconciliation with our Holy Creator and Lord. Reconciliation simply means to bring back together, to have all made well with God, to be put into friendship with God again. But, unlike human relationships where both parties work together toward a mutual reconciliation, reconciliation with God is a one-sided affair.

We as sinners can bring nothing to the bargaining table and are, in fact, incapable of initiation and effecting reconciliation with God because He is always in the right and we are completely in the wrong. For in human relationships there is always the presumption that both parties have, in some way, contributed to the conflicted relationship. As sinners, as those who humbly acknowledge our fallen state by nature, we know that no one born of Adam is every completely in the right.

Not so with God, however. As the Holy, Sinless Lord of Heaven and earth, He is never at fault and never in the wrong. The reason we need reconciliation with God is because He is holy and we are not. We are the ones, the Scripture teaches, who are ungodly. We are the ones who are the sinners. We are the ones solely responsible for being subject to His wrath and judgment. We are the one who broke the wonderful relationship God established with us in Adam and yet, in our sin, we are unable to effect and secure reconciliation with God. There are no terms that we can offer, no compromises that can be made in order for us to escape God's wrath. We cannot, despite our most fervent desires, our most heartfelt longing, make things well with God and obtain His favor.

We know this by experience, not just in our earthly relationships but also before God in Heaven. Even after reconciliation occurs in our relationship on earth, there is always an uneasiness that lingers. Though apologies and pardons have been offered and exchanged, many times doubts arise leading us to question whether all is well with another.

We often feel the same before God. Though redeemed by the blood of Christ, saved by His grace through faith in His name, we will sometimes wonder if all is well between God and us. When misfortune and troubles strike, we question whether God is still punishing us. When trials and sorrows come our way, we are tempted to wonder just where we stand with God on high. When we sin and are afflicted by our guilt, we feel the heat of God's wrath on our necks and become filled with doubt inquiring of ourselves and others if God's favor is truly ours.

We know what this is like in our relationship with God and in our relationships with each other. We are often tormented by the uncertainty. We are often restless and sleepless because of the doubts we have. We are often on "pins and needles" and even wonder when the other shoe is going to drop. Yes, our lives testify, our consciences remind us just how badly we need reconciliation, not just with our fellow man but especially with the Lord God of Heaven and earth, for without reconciliation we are in bondage to doubt, we are enslaved to sin and we lack any comfort and assurance whatsoever in our lives.

Tonight, however, we learn that God removes all such questions and doubts. Tonight St. Paul announces that you and I rejoice because God in Christ Jesus has already secured the reconciliation we needed with Him so that we are saved from His wrath. Later on, in the 8th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, the Apostle proclaims that there is "therefore, now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."

In other words, though we are ungodly, though we are enemies of God by nature, though we alone were to blame for bringing the wrath of the Law upon us, God in Jesus Christ came and did what we could not do – He made all things well between God and us. He secured the reconciliation we needed with God as the Mediator of us all.

Christ, the Son of God, knowing that reconciliation was a one-sided affair, took it upon Himself to reconcile Himself to us, to remove all that is objectionable and offensive to God on high. Yes, you heard that right. God the Son, Jesus Christ our Savior, took it upon Himself to reconcile Himself to us even while we were still sinners, still enemies of God, still subject to His wrath and displeasure. He knew there was nothing we could do. He knew there was nothing we could offer. He knew we were lost unless He accomplished it for us in our stead.

So, some 2010 years ago, the Son of God was born the Son of Mary in the city of David, to remove our sin and to justify us through His blood. Christ the Anointed of God entered our fallen existence through Mary's womb so that we through faith in Him may have the assurance that peace and good will is now ours

before God, that all is now well with God on high, that we are now the friends of God in His Name.

As the only appointed Mediator, Christ Jesus, the God-Man came to us as a Child and grew into a Man to rescue us from the wrath that is to come. St. Paul teaches that there is no other who could effect this change, who could establish the reconciliation that we needed with the Lord in Heaven "For *there is* one God and one Mediator between God and men, *the* Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all." Only He is the Savior of the world, the One who could meet the terms set forth for our reconciliation with God.

As our Savior and Mediator, Jesus took our place under the Law. He took our sin upon Himself and as a result brought to Himself the whole wrath and judgment of God. He became our Sin-Substitute, the One Sinner for every sinner from Adam to you and me. In order to settle the dispute, in order to remove the enmity that existed between God and us, He then shed His blood on Calvary's cross, satisfying the terms for our reconciliation with God in Heaven and establishing the New Testament in His blood by which we are justified through faith in His name.

Uplifted on the cross Jesus' arms extended from Heaven to earth signifying that the gulf has now been bridged through His holy sufferings and death. Jesus returned us to the Lord of Heaven and earth as He sacrificed His life, as He died as the Mediator of us all. There on the cross we see God stepping in the Person of His Son in order to return us to Himself, in order to make all things well with us again, in order to reconcile us and make us His friends through faith.

Through faith in Jesus Christ, the Mediator of the New Testament, the God-Man and Savior of the world, we have the reconciliation with God. We are no longer under His wrath and no longer need to fear His punishment for Jesus endured it all in our place. We are no longer threatened with death because we now have life in the Life of the world. We no longer are ungodly and enemies of God but are now righteous and called the friends of God, sons and daughters of the Most High God.

As those who are the recipients of this reconciliation with God through faith, the same God and Lord sends us forth to announce this news to others so that all may learn that in Jesus God and sinners, as our opening hymn announced, are reconciled. This was the same news that the angels announced at the advent of our Lord. This is the same message that Paul was sent forth to proclaim as an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But it is also the message we are to proclaim as those who are now the beneficiaries of the reconciliation effected through the blood of Christ Jesus, as those who have been ambassadors of the Kingdom of God through faith. So teaches St. Paul in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, chapter 5 saying "Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation."

In daily life we see many instances where reconciliation is needed and sought and, no doubt, you may often serve as a mediator in those instances when you are able. Consider how all need to hear of the reconciliation provided them before God in Christ Jesus, how you need to hear of it each and every day so that you may go forth rejoicing that your sins are forgiven and in the confidence that you are a saved child of God. Having received the reconciliation through Christ Jesus our Lord, go and share with others this big word of the Bible. Tell them of reconciliation, that in Jesus God and sinners are reconciled. Amen.

+Soli Deo Gloria+