

Sermon 12-17-17 The Purpose of Christmas – Reconciliation!

Romans 5:1-2

Dear Reconciled to God:

He was born to repair our broken relationship with God. He was born to heal the pain caused by our broken relationship with God. He was born to restore peace with God.

Broken relationships are painful. We all know this.

- Do you remember the pain of a broken relationship in your past?
- Do you remember your attempts to fix that broken relationship?
- Were you successful in reconciling your broken relationship?

On the internet there are Web sites that will allow you to post your forgiveness to someone else or ask for forgiveness. Here are three postings from one Web site:

- To my ex-wife of 27 years: I forgive you for destroying my life, my children's education, my retirement and your own future. I cannot fathom your motives, and I am not sure you understand that your actions affected more than your own life. While those motives are beyond me, I forgive your actions and wish you well. I suppose that, after everything, I still love you.
- My father died six years ago. I am still trying to forgive him. It is hard to forgive him when my sisters and I have spent most of our lives feeling helpless and angry. Learning to trust people is not so easy when the one who was supposed to keep you safe is the one who hurt you.
- I forgive my mother for her coldness, for keeping me at a distance, for using me as company when she had no friends, and dumping me when I was no longer needed. I forgive my mother for leaving me alone when I was upset and crying, I forgive my mother for agreeing with her friend who criticized my dress sense. I forgive my mother for putting me last, and, most of all , for all the lies.

I wonder if these people were able to reconcile.

Reconciliation

What is reconciliation? What does it exactly mean?

- Reconciliation is the process of making consistent or compatible.
- Reconciliation includes contrition, confession and absolution.
- Reconciliation means peace, accord, agreement and harmony.

If you have been deeply wounded, you know how difficult it is to restore peace and harmony with the person who offended you. Or if we are the person who offended another, we know that sometimes it's hard to accept their forgiveness because of the shame we may feel. And sometimes our relationships are so broken – so badly damaged – that it's impossible for us to restore peace and harmony.

The good news of Christmas is that God completed a reconciliation with us.

- God was the one offended – we sinned against Him
- God was the one who initiated forgiveness - He came to us with His love

Remember the announcement of the angels the night Jesus was born:

“Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.”

What kind of peace does Jesus give us at Christmastime? The Bible says God gives us:

- Peace with God
- Peace of God
- Peace with each other

Because of Christmas, we have Peace with God.

Romans 5:1-2 “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.”

We needed this Peace with God because we did Him wrong.

It all started way back in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree that God had told them not to. Satan came to Adam and Eve and deceived them. Satan was the first one to “scam” someone.

Adam and Eve were created as perfect people. They had...

- Perfect thoughts
- Perfect intentions
- Perfect actions
- Perfect attitudes
- Perfect love for God

But, the Bible records Adam and Eve’s fall in Genesis 3. The Bible also says: “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned...” Romans 5:12

- All have sinned
- All have been born...conceived with sin...
- All have received sin from Adam and Eve...it's in our DNA

Jesus Christ came to be the Reconciler between God and us.

How do we get this peace with God?

The Bible says: “We have been justified through faith, we have peace with God...”

The Bible says: “You have received the Spirit of adoption...” Romans 8:15

The Bible says: “In love God predestined us to be adopted through Jesus Christ for Himself, according to His favor and will...” Ephesians 1:4ff

What does it mean to be adopted by God? It means to be “placed as a child into God’s family.”

The Apostle Paul lived a Roman society which adoption was common. It was...

- A legal ceremony
- The adopted child was given all the rights of a natural born child
- The Romans laws are still the basis for our adoption laws today

The most famous adopted son in Roman society was Augustus Caesar. He was adopted by his great-uncle Julius Caesar and acquired the name Gaius Julius Caesar Octavian.

In the Roman ceremony of the adopted child four things happened...

- The adopted person was equal to any natural born children of the family
- The adopted person became heir to the father's estate
- The old life of the adopted person was completely wiped out...the adopted person's previous life never happened
- The adoption could not be voided.

In this way, God has adopted us. God looks upon our adoption of us as...

- A legally binding arrangement
- An emotional bond
- A spiritual bond

Through God's adoption of us we became His children. This means...

- We enjoy all of the rights of God's family – love, forgiveness and security.
- We are an heir to His kingdom – heaven
- Our old life is completely wiped out – our past is forgiven and forgotten by God
- We are now protected by God's family name.

We have Peace with God which gives us the Peace of God.

The peace of God happens when we have peace with God. Because of God's peace in our lives...

- The stress goes down in our lives
- We are not as angry and we have ways to deal with our anger
- We become more patient
- We are not bothered by things as much
- We are filled with love, God's love

The Bible says this about the peace of God: "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:7

- Rather than panic we pray
- Rather than worry we worship
- Rather than be afraid we trust in God's protection and care

We know our sins are forgiven. Our past is forgotten. There is NOW no condemnation of us. Rom 8:1

Once we have the peace with God and the peace of God in our lives this will help us have Peace with each other. The Bible says: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God." Matt 5

The Bible says: "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come!" II Cor 5

God has shown us grace. Now He calls us to show grace to others. We are to be peacemakers.

As a child of God who knows the Prince of Peace, we will be...

- Peacemakers not troublemakers at home, school and work
- Building people up not tearing them down
- Known for complimenting people not criticizing them

Christmas is the perfect time to show grace to others. Is there anyone in your life that you need to rebuild a relationship with?

We may say, "I can't do it. There are too many bad memories, past hurts, and things I can't just forget. I can't let go of it. I can't forgive them."

We can't reconcile on our own. We need Jesus. We can't forgive on our own. We need Jesus. We can't let go of it on our own. We need Jesus.

- We need to be filled with His love
- We need to be filled with His peace
- We need to be filled with His grace
- We need to be filled with His forgiveness

Remember the more sin and pain there is, the more God's grace covers us. Romans 5:20 "...But where sin increased, grace increased all the more..."

There is no limit to God's grace. There is no offense that He will not cover. God says to us: "I have seen your sin. I have seen the hurt in your life. I forgive you.

I love you. You matter to me. I will heal your hurt. I want you to love others in the same way that I love you. Trust in Me. I will give you My peace."

This is God's Christmas gift for you. Jesus Christ. The gift of reconciliation.

- Unwrap this gift
- Use this gift
- Live in this gift
- Celebrate because of this gift

Prayer: Lord, I thank you that you loved me. I thank you that you are with me. I thank you that you took my punishment through Jesus' death on the cross. Help me to live in this gift of reconciliation that you have given me purely out of your love and grace for me. Forgive me of my sins and help me to overcome the hurts and I have received from the sins of others. I need your peace. Help me to be a peacemaker. Help me to help others find your peace. Help me to forgive those who have offended me. Help me to give the gift of reconciliation to others this Christmas season. Take my pain away and help me to restore my broken relationships and you have restored my once broken relationship with you.

Thank you Lord for your gift to me. Thank you for Christmas.