

✠ Homily for Good Friday -- 14.April., A.D. 2017 ✠
St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 2958-59th St., Sacramento, CA 95817

Romans 5:6-11 6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! 10 For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! 11 Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. (NIV)

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory now and forever. Amen (Gal. 1:3,4)

The biblical text I've chosen is written in Romans ch. 5--this is one location where St. Paul opens up what God has done for us in Jesus' death & resurrection. (read above) - -

We have followed our Lord once again on the Via Dolorosa, the Path of Tears:	brought before Pilate and sentenced to death.
He was—arrested in the Garden— brought before the Sanhedrin— disowned by Peter— condemned by Caiaphas—	He was mocked by the soldiers— nailed to the cross at high noon— died after three long hours— and was buried in a borrowed grave.

Do we really want to re-examine in our minds, that awful event?
St. Paul is offering us what **the cross-event** means to us in our family lives, in our workplaces, in our friendships, even in our lives as citizens.
It means **reconciliation!** And that's the title of my sermon: "**Reconciliation.**"

First, A Diagnosis

Point 1, Do we know what reconciliation means?

Here's a Merriam-Webster definition: "**the act of causing two people or groups to become friendly again after an argument or disagreement.**"

Have we ever had arguments or disagreements? With family? w/ friends? w/ GOD?
When I was a pastoral psychologist I specialized in marriage & family therapy, and I've seen some vicious fighting in couples and families.

Have you ever experienced emotional "cut-off?" Loved ones not speaking for years?
Reconciliation can be very hard—becoming friendly again—forgiving and forgetting.

Point 2, It's Very Hard Because We're Hard-hearted.

St. Paul writes, *6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Yes, **we** are the **ungodly**—**we** are the **sinners** Paul writes to.
As sinners we are God's enemies—Paul states, *v 10...while we were God's enemies....*
Can you imagine a worse situation than to reject God and be his enemy?
And even if we are baptized believers, we certainly can still harbor enmity—hatred--
toward God and God's people--we are **double-minded people** as James tells us.

Listen to the words Luther, “**We are at one and the same time both sinners and saints**”—he is stating a paradox!

By definition, a paradox is “**something ... made up of two opposite things and that seems impossible but is actually true or possible.**”

However, can we harden our hearts, refuse to be reconciled, and still remain saints?

Point 3, The Eternal Consequences of Not Being Reconciled Are Severe.

Think about someone against whom you may have hardened your heart and have not worked towards reconciliation--is that not sinful?

In the very next chapter of Romans (6:23), Paul writes, “**sin pays its servants—the wage is death**” (Phillips NT)—in the grave there is no longer a chance for reconciling.

Dare we risk the eternal consequences?

To sum up, our diagnosis here by Paul says we are sinners, God’s enemies, and unreconciled.

But We Have a Good Prognosis in Part Two

This text has very good news—it is not only a law text, but also a gospel text.

And that’s another one of Luther’s theological paradoxes—Law/Gospel.

These are **the** two great doctrines of Holy Scripture—only by understanding and applying these two can we truly understand God’s Word for us.

Lex semper accusat—God’s Law always accuses us no matter how hard we try to obey.

But our Lord Jesus is the end of the Law, as Paul writes in ch. 10, **Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.**

This means that Christ is the eternal solution to the unthinkable eternal consequences we face if not reconciled.

But here it is not just being unreconciled with family or friends—here God’s law always accuses us that it is **God** with whom we are **not** reconciled.

We may think that because God is love we can count on God to overlook our refusals to make peace with one another.

But God is not friendly toward us until He takes matters out of our feeble hands and sends his One and Only Son into our rebellious world.

That’s very Good News, and Paul puts it this way here, **v.10 while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son....**

Listen carefully: the words, “we were reconciled” are in the passive voice in the Greek, meaning that we are passively receiving reconciliation--i.e., new friendliness--generated only from God’s side.

It is **God’s** movement toward us that makes God friends w/ us—and the cost was the death of God’s Son on this very day, the Day we call Good.

In II Corinthians, Paul puts it this way, (5:19) **God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them.**

Here the word “reconciling” is in the active voice, where, as Nunn says in his little Greek grammar, “A verb is said to be in the Active voice when its subject [that’s God] is spoken of as acting....” (*H. P.V. Nunn, A Short Syntax of N.T. Greek, 1949, p.6*)

God was acting in Christ—**God** did the reconciling of the world to himself.

The great Quempas Carol that some congregations sing at Christmas has this chorus, **God’s own Son is born a child, is born a child; God the Father is reconciled, is reconciled.** (LW #54)

At Christmas God’s great reconciliation movement toward us begins!

What great good news! **God’s own heart is reconciled toward us!**

Therefore, on this Good Friday as we worship here, God no longer looks at us strictly from a law point of view, but now sees us through the crucified and risen Christ.

Listen: in this moment, God is no longer against us--**we are reconciled** in Christ.

In our text, St. Paul writes: **9 Since we have now been justified by his blood,... how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!**
Such is the love God has for us--he saved us from everlasting death--trust God--trust God's promise.

Then how shall we act towards those who hurt us and damage our hard hearts?
I close with a quote from the great 19th C. preacher, Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892):

Our love ought to follow the love of God, namely, in our always seeking to produce reconciliation. Has anybody offended you? Seek reconciliation. "Oh, but I am the offended party." So was God, and He went straight away and sought reconciliation. Brother/Sister, do the same. "Oh, but I have been insulted." Just so -- so was God; all the wrong was toward Him, yet He sent. "Oh, but the [other] party is so unworthy." So are you; but "God loved you and sent His Son." Go you and [act] according to that [Word].

Yes, let's you and I, act for reconciliation. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria

The Rev. Dr. Don Schedler, Ph.D., Snowline Hospice Chaplain, Retired,
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