

“We Rejoice in the Reconciliation that Comes Only Through Jesus”

**Vs. 9-11 “Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him! For if, when 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! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.”**

Dearly loved children of God,

It had been 20 years since the last time they spoke to one another. It had been so long, that neither one could really recall all the reasons for their fight which had brought about the end of their life-long friendship. But finally, after 20 years without any contact, one of them swallowed their pride and reached out to their former friend asking if they could meet. They met at the coffee shop they used to hang out at. When they saw one another, they couldn’t hold back the tears. After a hug that seemed to last an eternity, they both sobbed words of regret and asked for forgiveness. They both realized the wrong they had done to one another. They no longer wanted to be enemies. They wanted to be best friends once again.

That is a picture of reconciliation. Reconciliation is a big word, and it’s an important word. Reconciliation marks a complete change of status from enemies to friends. The Bible uses this word to describe what God has done for us through his Son, Jesus Christ. In the season of Lent, the redeeming work of our Savior, Jesus Christ, is front and center. The redeeming work of Jesus brought about this reconciliation. Jesus has completely changed our relationship with God. Because of what Jesus has done for us, God no longer calls us enemies but friends and his dearly loved children. This reconciliation between sinful mankind and a holy God came about through the suffering and death of Jesus.

Can you think of any greater reason to rejoice? And so today, **“We rejoice in the reconciliation that comes only through Jesus.”** As we consider this portion of Romans chapter 5 before us today, we want to see that this reconciliation is unique. It is different in some very important ways from the reconciliation I mentioned earlier between the two friends. We will consider how our reconciliation with God was secured in a very different way and how it brings about a very different peace.

I.

Often for two people to be reconciled, both sides have to swallow their own pride and ego. Both sides have to learn to trust each other and live up to that trust. Both sides need to forgive each other and learn to compromise. Because both sides are usually at fault for causing the division in the first place. This is how those two friends were reconciled. They secured reconciliation through compromise.

But the reconciliation that God worked for us in Christ Jesus was secured in a very different way. God did not reconcile us to himself through compromise. God had done nothing wrong. He is perfect, holy and completely good. Any compromise on his part would be sacrificing good. And that would be wrong.

What is more, we were completely unable to compromise on our part. The apostle Paul said in our text that we were **“powerless.”** We had no strength to do what was good, no ability to take a step towards God, no desire to trust in him. In fact, as Paul accurately described us we were completely **“ungodly.”** We had no love for God, no respect for his Word or will, and no desire to worship God. And why is that? Because we were sinners. We were filled with evil desires. Our words and actions were completely corrupt. We always missed the mark of perfection that God demands. And no type of compromise could bring about a reconciliation.

The more you look at what we are like by nature, the more hopeless a reconciliation with God appears to be. True reconciliation requires trust. Our sinful nature refuses to trust God. We know that he is a just God who will call us to account. And so instead of trust, terror and hate are our natural responses to God. We were born enemies of God.

And what did we do when God entrusted us with his commandments? We betrayed that trust. We break those commandments with our thoughts, words and actions, time and time again. There is more hope that President Trump and Hillary Clinton will become best friends, rather than reconciliation between us and God, at least from a human point of view.

But God in his love and wisdom planned a very different way to reconcile us to himself. It wasn’t through compromise but through sacrifice. It wasn’t through building up mutual trust, but through giving his Son out of pure grace while we were still godless sinners.

Just think about that. As the apostle Paul mentioned, **“Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die.”** Some of our soldiers may sacrifice their lives to protect their families and country from terrorist attacks. But who of you would sacrifice your life to protect a terrorist?

That’s what Jesus did for you. While you were still an ungodly, sinful enemy of Jesus, he died for you. God offered his Son as the bloody sacrifice in your place. The Son of God died instead of you and me. What amazing mercy! What amazing love! What amazing grace!

Listen again to how Paul underlines this mind-boggling contrast of what Jesus did to reconcile us even though we deserved the opposite, **“At just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly... While we were still sinners, Christ died for us...when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son.”**

Remember this as we survey the wondrous cross this Lenten season. That cross shows you how God reconciled you to himself. Our reconciliation was secured in a very different way – not through compromise but through the death of Jesus Christ. That is why we rejoice, even during Lent. That is why the day Jesus died is called “Good Friday.” We know and believe that Jesus’ sacrifice changes our relationship with God. He freely gives us the status of friends rather than enemies. And so rejoice in the reconciliation that comes only through Jesus.

## II.

But you and I have even more reason to rejoice in the reconciliation that comes only through Jesus. For that reconciliation brings a very different peace.

When human beings are reconciled, there is always doubt. Will this peace last? Will old arguments and grudges reignite? Can I really trust this person now? But God’s reconciliation is quite different.

Instead of a doubtful peace, God’s reconciliation brings a sure salvation, a peace that never ends. This is our unfailing hope that will not disappoint. Why can we be so sure that we will be saved? Listen to what Paul said, **“Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!”** The judge has already declared us not guilty because Jesus’ blood has paid for our sins in full. If the judge declares us “Not guilty!” do we need to fear his anger or think that he will sentence us to death? Of course not!

Paul puts it another way, **“For if, when 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!”** When we were God’s enemies, he sacrificed his Son for us. Now that we are his friends and dearly loved children through faith, won’t we be saved since Jesus lives?

Those who do not trust in Jesus’ sacrifice for them do not have this peace of salvation. But we are confident that through faith in Jesus we will be saved for all eternity. Therefore, we rejoice in the reconciliation that comes only through Jesus and brings salvation.

This reconciliation brings us a different kind of peace so that we can rejoice right now, even in the midst of suffering and pain. And we suffer in many ways, don’t we? We suffer physically as we struggle with pain and illness. We suffer emotionally when we feel alone, unloved or down in the dumps. We suffer socially when others ridicule us for our faith. And we suffer spiritually as we struggle against the temptations we face on a daily basis.

And yet, as we struggle and suffer in all these ways we can still rejoice. Why? Paul gives us a number of reasons. He said, **“Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”** Faith in Jesus holds on to God’s verdict that we are declared not guilty and so we have peace with God because our sins are forgiven, even when life feels chaotic. Paul goes on, **“through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.”** We can go to God with any problem and know that because of Jesus, God will give us the best answer. Paul also mentions the sure hope we have of eternal life in heaven. Our sufferings only make us more eager for our heavenly home. And finally, Paul said, **“(God keeps pouring) out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.”** As the Holy Spirit comes to us in Word and sacrament, he points us to God’s love in Christ Jesus, God’s love which sacrificed his Son to reconcile us to himself.

And so we are back where we started. We are back at Christ’s sacrifice for us. It is certainly a wonderful thing when two people who were at odds with each other are reconciled. But how much more wonderful is the reconciliation we have in Christ Jesus! What a unique reconciliation it is! It was secured in a very different way – not by compromise, but by sacrifice. It was secured by the death of God’s Son for us who were his enemies. And it brings about a very different kind of peace – the peace of salvation that will never fail, even in the face of suffering. Rejoice in this reconciliation that comes only through Jesus. Amen.