

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Fourth Sunday After Trinity, June 28, 2015

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)
Hymns: 245, 391:1, 351, 371:1-4, 141.
Lessons: Psalm 36:5-10, Galatians 4:4-9, John 10:14-18.
Sermon Text: Romans 5:6-11.
Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Don't we sometimes read or hear in the news of someone intentionally dying for someone else? Drowning to save someone else. Dying to rescue someone. Especially in the history of war we find that men have died to save others, and they are then regarded as heroes.

Last week you heard *"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."* (Romans 5:1-15 NIV) Because we have peace with God, *"we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God."*

Now God explains more about the marvelous thing he did for us when he justified us, that is, when he declared mankind "Not Guilty".

He tells us

CHRIST DIED FOR THE UNGODLY

- 1. This shows God's marvelous and great love for mankind.**
- 2. We have been justified by his blood and are saved from God's wrath through Christ.**
- 3. We are no longer God's enemies but have been reconciled by the death of Jesus Christ.**

If you are paying any attention at all to what is happening in the world, you know that human is fighting against human. Nation is fighting against nation, tribe against tribe, religious faction against religious faction, gang against gang.

Throughout the world, nothing would work better to create peace among humans than reconciliation among those who are fighting or have differences. But world-wide reconciliation of men to men won't happen – because of sin.

Or, to look at another more personal illustration of the idea of reconciliation, when children are fighting someone may try to step in and make them stop fighting, shake hands and be friends. That is what reconciliation means and is all about. Reconciliation means to stop fighting and stop being enemies. It means to become friends, to settle differences, and to bring two parties into agreement or harmony.

Paul continues in chapter 5 of Romans *"You see, at just the right time"* God reconciled man to himself. This was in God's right time that God sent his Son to bring about reconciliation between sinful mankind and the holy God. Paul writes in Galatians: *"But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons."* (Galatians 4:4-5 NIV) This was entirely on God's timetable, not in response to any human choosing or planning. This was accomplished even when all humans were in a condition of being unable to do anything at all good.

For centuries, in fact since mankind first sinned, believers in God were looking for this one who would redeem them and crush the head of the serpent, Satan, and set them free from sin, death, and the devil's power. Eve at first thought that her firstborn son was the one who would accomplish this and restore peace between God and man, the one who would reconcile God and man. But that wasn't to be. It happened only in God's good time,

in God's right time, when God decided it was to happen that the Savior came, several thousand years after creation.

In explaining this, Paul begins: ***"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly."*** We – all mankind – were powerless, dead in trespasses and sins. And someone who is dead just can't do anything! They – all mankind and us – had no power, ***"when we were still powerless"*** and that is when God sent the Redeemer.

Prophecies and promises had been made repeatedly throughout the scriptures, throughout the history of mankind. But mankind had not changed from the time of the sins of Eve and Adam.

Look at how Paul describes us and all mankind here. He piles up the words which show how terrible and undeserving of anything we were. We were ***"powerless"*** and ***"ungodly"***, ***"sinners"***, and ***"God's enemies"***. Our situation was hopeless, but God reconciled us ***"through the death of his Son"***.

By nature we – all mankind – didn't want anything to do with God and his promised Savior. And the world in which we are living today is no different. People by nature want nothing to do with God, his law or his Gospel through Jesus Christ.

But even though we were – and are – such horrible people, ***"Christ died"*** for us. He really died. He gave up his life. He sacrificed his life for us, ***"for the ungodly."*** And of course, if we look in the mirror of God's law, we recognize who ***"the ungodly"*** are. That is me, that is you, that is us, that is all mankind.

Paul tells us how rare that is, how special that is, that someone would die for someone else. ***"Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man."*** God is describing human nature. From our human perspective, we don't want to put ourselves in danger, especially in danger of dying even for a righteous man or for a good cause.

Paul does concede that ***"for a good man someone might possibly dare to die."*** Even if a person has all kinds of legal and logical reasons to expect help and support from others, only very rarely will someone step in to die for him. Someone might die ***"for a good man,"*** that is, one whose position of power or prestige strongly argues that he should be spared for the public good – somebody might possibly dare to die. Isn't this the case of Secret Service men who protect the president of the United States? Or we might think of a case such as that of a soldier throwing himself on a live grenade to spare the members of his group. It might possibly happen, but don't count on it. With both these examples, the point is the same. Human love generally doesn't extend to the point of a person's dying for his neighbor.

How many people would you give up your life for? I bet you could count them on one hand, if you could count them at all. Would you die for your spouse? Possibly, because you really love that person. Friends? Probably not. Remember, there is no reward for giving up your life for someone. Patriotism for one's country, or the chance to save many lives aside, not many people would want to die. But to die for your enemies, to give up your life for anyone who really hates you? It just wouldn't be done.

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." What doesn't happen among people, God did. Do you want to know if God loves you? Look at what he has willingly done for you. When you were an ungodly sinner actively opposed to God, Christ died for you – as he did for everyone.

This is the God ***"who justifies the wicked."*** (Romans 4:5 NIV)

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." But. And what a huge "but" this is! God shows his love for us. He sacrificed his only-begotten Son, who was made man, come down to earth for this specific purpose. Jesus, with the full consent and agreement of the Triune Godhead was "conceived by the Holy Ghost [and] born of the Virgin Mary" so that he could do this very thing – die for God's enemies! What amazing love!

The Greek word used here for "love" is "agape", (uh gaa' pay) one-way unreciprocated love coming entirely from God. All the good things in this relationship originate on God's side.

God did this very thing ***"While we were still sinners."*** While we were still evil, vile, wicked people. And so, because of the blood of Jesus Christ and his reconciliation and God's justifying us, God looks at us as no longer sinners.

"Christ died for us." This is repeated for the second time in three verses, and the death of Jesus Christ God's son is mentioned again in the next verse. He gave up his life. He died to save us.

As a result, God has justified us, he has declared us not guilty. ***“We have now been justified by his blood.”*** This took the death of Jesus Christ our Lord. God prepared his Old Testament people for this by requiring them to make sacrifices with the lives and the blood of lambs and goats and bulls and doves.

“Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!” Now look. We have been justified, declared not guilty by the righteous, just, honest and fair judge. As a result, we shall be saved from God’s eternal wrath because of what Jesus Christ did.

Justification is a present reality, bringing the priceless blessings of peace, joy, and hope even now amid sufferings. And it will be even better in the future.

Look at the long view: the future: ***“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!”*** Look at the comparison. When we were enemies of God because of our sinfulness, we were reconciled through the death, the sacrifice of his son. So, ***“how much more,”*** how much greater isn’t the joy that we have been saved eternally and given eternal life because Jesus Christ came back to life! Since we have been reconciled, won’t we also be saved eternally? Yes! Jesus died and that paid the price for our sins. He came back to life and we, too, shall come back to life after our temporal death to be saved and rescued through Jesus’ coming back to life.

We were God’s enemies and God’s Son hung dead on the cross. But God did the impossible: he reconciled us to himself, and he brought his Son back to life.

If Christ paid all that with his holy sinless life and his precious body and blood to save us, won’t he also complete the deal and give us eternal life?

How foolish – if we dare to even think of God being foolish – wouldn’t it be if God paid the tremendous price and then threw away what he paid for! God wants no one to be damned. But he cautions us that ***“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”*** (Mark 16:16 NIV)

God’s love, poured out into our hearts gives us a sure hope for the day of God’s eternal and final judgment.

As a result, we also rejoice. ***“Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.”*** Yes, this is the way it is. This is what God has done.

God saved us and so we rejoice – remember last Sunday’s sermon – in what God has done for us.

We rejoice not in ourselves, but ***“in God.”*** We don’t rejoice in what we have done or in the blood of any animals we might sacrifice but we rejoice in God – the triune God, the true God – through what Jesus did.

This is what it means to have received reconciliation. It is ***“through our Lord Jesus Christ,”*** because of Jesus and what he did for us that we rejoice.

Paul repeats this same idea when he writes to the Corinthian Christians, emphasizing how the life of the believer in Christ has been changed. ***“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”*** (2 Corinthians 5:17-21 NIV) This goes hand in hand with a passage we have just quoted. You, too, are to ***“preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”*** (Mark 16:15-16 NIV)

Not only have you received reconciliation, you have received the mission to share that message of reconciliation. You personally are an ambassador for Christ. You are his personal representative. May this glorious message of reconciliation not be bottled up in your heart, but given freely! Amen.