

Lent 4 / March 30, 2025

2 Corinthians 5:20

*“Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”*

### Reconciled to God through Christ

Are you reconciled to God? What does it mean to be reconciled to God? What do we have to do to be reconciled to God? Even before any of those questions we have to ask, what reconciliation with God means and ask why we even need it. Reconciliation means to be brought back into a good relationship with another person, or group of people. It assumes a broken and bad relationship. It also implies the mutual acknowledgement of a bad relationship by all parties involved. Do we need to be reconciled to God? Not everyone would see any problem with their relationship with God. People who don't believe in God, or who don't believe there is anything wrong between them and God, would see no need to be reconciled to God. In order to be reconciled to God we must see and acknowledge something broken and defective in our relationship with God. Is there anything wrong in our relationship with God?

God is the source of goodness. The fact that not everything is good in the world and in our lives in the world, is a primary indication there is something wrong in the human relationship with God in general and with individual people's relationship with God in particular. God told the first people they and the earth were cursed because of their sin. A person once told me that if there were a God, there would be nothing bad in the world. Actually, it's the other way around. If there were nothing bad in our relationship with God there would be nothing bad in the world. Something has broken the human relationship with God. A common belief among the most primitive peoples is that the gods were once close to humans, but humans offended the gods and the gods became as distant from humans as the sky is from the earth. The bible tells us that sin destroyed the human relationship with God and brought bad into the world and into our lives. Because there is something bad in the human relationship with God there is bad in the world and in the lives of everyone in the world. The brokenness in the world and in our lives testifies to the brokenness of our relationship with God and our need to be reconciled to Him. The good news of the gospel, shining brightly in our text is that we are reconciled to God in Christ through the forgiveness of our sins.

Sin separates us from God. The prophet Isaiah told Israel, *“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or His ear dull that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.”* Sin separates us from God. God is the source of all that is good. In Him we live and move and have our being. He is the source of the life of all things living. He is the substance of the elements of the universe. In Him is all goodness, apart from Him is all that is bad. In Him there is life, without Him there is decay and death. Sin, sorrow, suffering, evil and death all show that there is something terribly wrong in the human relationship with God and that we need to be reconciled to Him.

All people need reconciliation, to be brought into a good relationship with God through the removal of sin. Sin affects all people from the moment of conception to the moment of death. Sin is the cause of death and death comes to all, because all are affected by sin. All people need to be reconciled to God in the forgiveness of sin. The good news of the gospel is that God has reconciled the world to Himself in Christ through the sacrifice of His cross, by which He atoned for the sin of the world. Sin continues to exist and will affect the world until the return of Christ and renewal of all things, but for the sake of Jesus, God no longer counts sin against us. God has reconciled us to Himself in Christ. We receive reconciliation with Him through faith and baptism into His death and resurrection. Paul as a commissioned representative and ambassador of Christ, urges us to receive reconciliation with God, by receiving Christ in our hearts through faith and believing in Him as our God and Saviour.

Paul and the apostles were ambassadors for Christ. In the world of politics, an ambassador represents his or her government to the government of another people. An ambassador speaks for the people who commissioned them. An ambassador has to be careful to accurately express the position of her or his government to the government of another people. Ambassadors do not express personal opinions. If they do and their personal opinions are not the opinion of their government, they will be recalled and replaced. The position of ambassador is similar to the position of apostle. The word ‘apostle’ simply means sent. It could refer to something as simple as being sent to buy groceries. The deeper meaning of apostle is one who is sent as a representative or ambassador of another person. Ambassadors represent nations, an apostle represents a person. Paul calls himself and his fellow workers, Ambassadors for Christ. The apostles represented Christ to

the world as men commissioned by Him to proclaim the gospel of salvation through faith in Him.

As members of the priesthood of all believers, we all represent Christ to the world and all share the church's commission to proclaim the gospel to the nations. However, the apostles had a special commission, received personally from Christ. Paul by special revelation. The others by sharing in His earthly ministry. In the Roman world apostles were legal representatives of another person. An apostle as a legal representative, had full rights of decision making and the power to conduct legal transactions in the name of the person who commissioned them. To deal with the apostle was to deal with the person who had commissioned them. Christ did the work of reconciling the world to God through the sacrifice of His cross. He sent the apostles to proclaim the reconciliation of the cross to the world and to call the world to be reconciled to God by believing in Him as their Saviour and being baptized in His Name. Jesus said, *"Everyone who believes and is baptized will be saved."*

Paul says in our text, *"In Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the ministry of reconciliation."* Christ commissioned the apostles to represent Him, by proclaiming the gospel of salvation to the world, calling people to receive reconciliation with God, by believing in Him as their Saviour and receiving baptism in the divine Name; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. When Paul says, "Be reconciled to God," He means to believe and be baptized in His Name. On the day of Pentecost Peter did the work of an apostle when he showed the crowd gathered in Jerusalem that their sins had separated them from God. When they were convicted of their sins, Peter told them the good news of reconciliation with God through the forgiveness of sin. He said to them, *"Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins."* God is reconciled to us in Christ. We are reconciled to God in Christ through faith and baptism in His Name.

Christ commissioned the apostles to lay the foundation of the Christian church, by proclaiming Him as Saviour and offering Him for all to receive. The cornerstone of the Christian faith is that Christ atoned for the sin of the world through the service of His life and the sacrifice of His body on the cross. The foundational teaching of the Christian faith, upon which the church falls or stands is that in Christ, God offers forgiveness and healing in relationship with Him for all to receive and gives it freely and fully to all who believe. It was the responsibility of the apostles and now of the Christian Church, to proclaim reconciliation with God through Christ

and to call people to receive reconciliation with God by receiving Christ and believing in Him as their God and Saviour. God has reconciled us to Himself in Christ. We are reconciled to God when we receive Christ into our hearts and believe in Him as our God and Saviour.

The Holy Spirit open our hearts through the word to believe in Christ as our God and Saviour. The Holy Spirit through the word, the washing of baptism and the nourishment of Christ's body and blood in Holy Communion, preserve our faith until reconciliation is made full in our share of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In His Name. Amen.