

The Ministry of Reconciliation

Opening:

We've talked a lot about conviction, confession, and repentance over the last couple of months. All of these are very important. But ***why*** are they important? Because they all lead to one thing...restoration of our friendship with God.

Key Text:

2 Corinthians 5:11-21

What is Reconciliation?

Reconciliation:

1. Oxford Dictionary: Restoration of friendly relations (friendship)
2. Britanica: the act of causing two people or groups to become friendly again after an argument or disagreement.

Our original design:

Our original design was to live in close proximity to God. It was an intimate relationship. God formed humanity with his own hands, something no other part of creation shares. And then he leaned in and breathed His life directly into us.

Genesis 2:7

This was an intimate act that showed the kind of relationship that God wants with us. He created humanity to live in a face-to-face, unrestricted relationship with Him. And it is this kind of relationship that Jesus has restored to us.

Sin-focused salvation vs. friendship-focused salvation

Forgiveness is only the first step in salvation. Confession and repentance lead us to the forgiveness of God. But we were never meant to stop there. Reconciliation - the restoration of our friendship with God - is what it is all about.

If all we are doing is constantly seeking forgiveness, we are stuck in a sin-focused salvation. “The forgiveness of sins was not Jesus’ ultimate goal. Reconciliation was. Forgiveness just wipes the slate clean. Reconciliation is a restoration of friendship with God. This is a profound difference, and it changes everything about how we view the cross.

Reconciliation is not just a single act that can be marked off a checklist list all neat and tidy. Reconciliation is the daily restoration of our friendship with God, and it is through this intimate relationship that God breathes His life into our lungs and says what Jesus says in John 20:21 - “Peace be with you.

The Gospel is about so much more than sin; it’s about friendship. A sin-focused salvation keeps us trapped in a cycle of sin, confession, and then refailure. A friendship-based relationship with God allows us to take our focus off of us and put it on the One who truly loves us.

It is only through understanding our friendship with God that we can see there is a way to break the cycle. And it really has nothing to do with what we can do.

You see, God is Love (**1 John 4:8**) . But more than that, He is Love loving. Loving is what God actively does, because he can’t ***not*** love. He can’t help himself, it’s who He is. When God reveals Himself to Moses in Exodus 34:6-7, he states that He is:

“Yahweh! The Lord!

The God of compassion and mercy!

I am slow to anger and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness. I lavish unfailing love to a thousand generations....“

And the Good News is that we don’t have to beg for or earn God’s love. We just need to accept it.

Romans 8:38-39

So then, what do we do with this love that has been so lavishly poured out on us?

We plead with others to “Come back to God”

In **Mark 12:30-31**, Jesus tells us what our response to God-love should be.

Our relationship with our Father is the prototype for all our other relationships.

If we understand that the Gospel of Reconciliation begins before the fall in Genesis with God’s face-to-faceness with us, then we are more likely to see the essential good in someone first and prioritize their rediscovering friendship with their Father over moral correctness.

2 Corinthians 5:16

We begin to see others the way that God does. Not as filthy sinners, but as his beloved children. Children, he longs to have a face-to-face relationship with again. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross did not make God love us. He loved us way before and forever after that moment.

Confession and repentance are the first step in turning from the path of destruction we are on and back to God. That is the message that we have to preach.

NOT: You have to clean up your life.

NOT: You're a worthless sinner.

NOT: You have to be better.

NOT: Your political affiliation has to change.

NOT: Your lifestyle is horrible and sinful.

The message we must show the world is: You are loved. You are loved more than you could ever imagine.

Don't get me wrong. Some churches have erred by focusing only on the message Jesus said, "neither do I (condemn you)," but forget that he also said, "Go, and sin no more." We can love and accept people by showing them the love of God. And then it is the the Holy Spirit's job to convict their hearts. We are only here to be witnesses to God's love and the effect that He's had on our lives.

2 Corinthians 5:18-21

Now that we have been given the task of reconciling people to God.

We have the same calling as Jesus. He reconciled us to Himself, and He has called us to the same ministry of reconciliation. We plead with those around us, "Come back to God!" We do that by accepting God's love for us and sharing that same love with those around us. God is wooing the world through his love. And that is how we are going to help people find their way back to God.

The world is starving for true love. And if the Church of Jesus can't show them that kind of love, they will find a counterfeit love from other groups out there.

Questions for today:

1. Have you been a good steward of the love of God? Does your life reflect your face-to-face relationship with God or do you need to turn back to Him?
2. Who do you have in your life right now that you need to show the love of God to? Who could be transformed and feel loved if they were shown the true love and acceptance of God?