

“The Reconciliation of Jesus Christ” Matthew 5:20-26 Trinity 6 2023

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Nearly 6,000 years ago, Adam and Eve broke communion with God with their disobedience against God and His Word. They disobeyed by wanting to be like God knowing good and evil. Their disobedient act was in the eating of the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil which God had forbidden. Adam and Eve’s disobedience grew when Adam blamed God for his actions and Eve blamed the servant for hers. Adam and Eve had malice in their hearts toward God. They blamed everyone but themselves for their actions. (Gen. 3:12-13)

A little later on, after Eve gives birth to her two boys, Cain and Abel, the time had come for the boys to bring an offering before the Lord. Cain and Abel did just that; Cain brought his gift with pride in his heart and his gift was rejected by the Lord. Abel brought his gift in faith and his gift was received. Cain was very angry and later killed his brother Abel out in the fields. (Gen. 4:3-8)

After the Lord brought His people out of Egypt through the Red Sea, the congregation of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron. They were mad. They said, “Oh, that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.” (Ex. 16:2-3)

So far, in all three cases in Scripture, you see the lack of faith in

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the lives of the people except Abel. Abel believed in the Lord. He did as the Lord commanded.

There are many more cases of anger, bitterness, and murder in the Scripture; both against God and man. What about you? Where do you fit in with Jesus’ discussion today in the Gospel lesson? Are you included in His teaching against murder, anger, bitterness and the like? Yes, you are included as are all men, women, and children of the world, past, present, and future.

St. James writes, “For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.” (James 2:10) God is serious about the life He wants for us and all people. God is love and thus wants us to love one another. Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.” (John 13:34)

When you sin in thought, word, and deed, you are not righteous in the sight of God. The sin of murder, as with all sins, affects both the vertical relationship between you and God and also the horizontal relationship between you and your neighbour.

Jesus’ lesson to you is most important today. His lesson is about reconciliation. Reconciliation is a big word and often, especially in North American Lutheranism, misused in the life of the Church. Reconciliation is nothing more than removing the sin between you and God and you and your neighbour. Reconciliation involves a contrite

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heart, that is, a true sorrow for the sin committed. Jesus calls this repentance. Reconciliation also involves the admission of guilt. Jesus calls this confessing your sins. Finally, reconciliation involves forgiveness.

How can you, a poor weak sinner acquire the righteousness of God? Simply, faith in Jesus Christ. Yes, whoever, even you, who despairs of his own righteousness, who believes in Jesus Christ, who perfectly fulfilled the Law of God for all men, even you. Jesus, by His innocent suffering and death bore and atoned for the sins of the world, even yours, God graciously forgives all your sins.

St. Paul writes in his second letter to the Church in Corinth, “Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.” (2 Cor. 5:18) The ministry of reconciliation is the ministry Jesus gives to His Church and to His pastors; the ministry of the forgiveness of sins. Jesus gives you the Gospel in the Office of the Keys to exercise between one another. He gives the Office of the Keys to His pastors to exercise publicly on behalf of the Church.

The love that God shows you through His mercy is so great especially when you hear those words; I forgive you, either by your neighbour or by your pastor. I forgive you are words of the Gospel. They are words of love and mercy. They are for you when you repent and confess your sins.

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Jesus died to bring these words to your ears. He laid His life down on God’s altar in your place and suffered His Father’s wrath against your sins. Jesus drank the cup of wrath down to and including the dregs. He drank it all for you. You no longer stand *Corem Deo*, that is, before God, a lost and condemned sinner. You stand before God, righteous in His sight because of the atoning sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ, for you.

God the Father no longer sees you dead in your trespasses but He sees you alive, holy and righteous in His Son. You were given the righteousness of Christ when He baptized you. Jesus reconciled you to His Father in His suffering, death, and resurrection.

Harmony reigns when together, pastor and people, we fall before God’s Word in trembling awe. Our heavenly Father reconciled the world through Jesus Christ. The Word of reconciliation is in our ears in Preaching, poured over our heads in Baptism, and put in our mouths in the Supper. When harmony among brethren in Christ reigns in a congregation, it will be apparent to you and to the community that Jesus Christ has formed us to be like Him in word and deed. Walking together, united in love and doctrine, covered in the blood of Jesus, it is good and pleasant to dwell in harmony, for we are reconciled to God and one another because of Jesus.

Your sins are forgiven on this holy day. Go in peace brothers and sisters and be reconciled with your neighbour in the Name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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