TITLE: Reconciliation

TEXT: Ro. 5:8-11; Luke 2:10-11; Jn. 15:13; 2 Co. 5:17-21;

Ephe. 1:7; Mt. 5:23-24; Mk. 11:25; Mt. 18:21-35

INTRODUCTION: This morning I want to talk about a “big Word” of Scripture and that is reconciliation…

 Once we are justified, declared righteous by God through our relationship with Jesus Christ we are saved, we are forgiven our sin and stand before God literally clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

 Through that process something else pretty wonderful happens and that is reconciliation.

 **Roma 5:8 (NIV) But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

**9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!**

**10 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!**

**11 Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.**

 After we have been justified by the blood of Jesus Christ and saved from our sin through our confession of Jesus as Lord of our life, something else of amazing proportion happens and that is reconciliation.

**11 Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.**

Through Jesus we have the opportunity to be reconciled to God.

 What does it mean to be reconciled to God?

**2644 katallasso {kat-al-las'-so}**

**1a) to reconcile (those who are at variance)**

**1b) return to favor with, be reconciled to one**

**1c) to receive one into favor**

Through Christ Jesus we can be reconciled to God! We can be returned into His favor…

Church, this is good news! This is the good news that the angel proclaimed to the shepherds at the birth of Christ.

 **Luke 2:10 (NIV) But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.**

**11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.**

 What was so good about this news that the angel was proclaiming?

 God would one day reconcile fallen man unto Himself through this babe that was just born in a manger in the town of Bethlehem.

 The final act, the completion of this reconciliation would take place some 33 years later on a cross on a hillside overlooking Jerusalem. Reconciliation with God, for the first time sense mans fall from grace in the garden of Eden, reconciliation with God is now possible because of what this Christ child would grow up and do for us on the cross…

 Through Jesus there is now a way for each of us to be reconciled with God, to return to Gods favor.

**10 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!**

**11 Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.**

 I read about A neat example, a picture of this reconciliation that took place on the cross…..

EXAMPLE: There was a little girl whose parents had had a miserable marriage and were divorced, having nothing in common except their affection for their child. One day as the girl was playing in the street she was hit by a bus and seriously injured.

 Taken to the hospital, she was examined by the doctors but was found to be beyond human aid.

 Hastily summoned to the hospital, her parents heard the sad news and stood silently, one on either side of the bed, looking down helplessly at their little girl. As they stood there, the child's eyes suddenly opened and seeing her parents she tried to smile. Then drawing one arm from under the sheet, she held it out in the direction of her father. "Daddy," she said, "give me your hand." Turning to her mother, she stretched out her other arm. "Mummy," she said, "give me your hand." Then with a final effort of her fast-ebbing strength she drew them close to herself and close together.

 What a neat a picture of what Christ did for us on the cross. The Savior reached out for the hand of sinful man and placed it in the hand of a loving God. Jesus reconciled us to God; He broke down the barrier; He restored the broken fellowship caused by sin. Just as this little girl's dying wish was to bring her parents together, Jesus dying wish on the cross was to bring God and fallen man together. The sole purpose of Jesus death was to reconcile us to God..

**John 15:13 (NIV) Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.**

The Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard once sought to describe the incarnation of God in Christ. He used this simple illustrative story:

 A certain king was very rich. His power was known throughout the world. But he was still the most unhappy, for he desired a wife. Without a queen, the vast palace was empty.

 One day, while riding through the streets of a small village, he saw a beautiful peasant girl. She was so lovely that the heart of the king was won over. He wanted her more than anything he had ever desired. On succeeding days, he would ride by her house on the mere hope of seeing her for a moment in passing.

 He wondered how he might win her love. He thought, I will draw up a royal decree and require her to be brought before me to become the queen of my land.

 But, as he considered, he realized that she was a subject and would be forced to obey. He could never be certain that he had won her love.

 Then, he said to himself, "I shall call on her in person. I will dress in my finest royal garb, wear my diamond rings, my silver sword, my shiny black boots, and my most colorful tunic. I will overwhelm her and sweep her off her feet to become my bride.

 " But, as he pondered the idea, he knew that he would always wonder whether she had married him just for the riches and power he could give her.

 Then, he decided to dress as a peasant, drive to the edge of town, and have his carriage let him off.

 In disguise, he would approach her house. But, somehow the duplicity of this plan did not appeal to him.

 At last, he knew what he must do. He would shed his royal robes. He would go to the village and become one of the peasants. He would work and suffer with them. He would actually become a peasant. This he did. And he won his wife.

 So did God consider how He might win humankind. God in Christ became one of us. He took upon Himself the form of human flesh to dwell among us. This is what the Apostle Paul meant when he said, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself"

**2Cor 5:17 (NIV) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!**

**18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:**

**19 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.**

**20 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.**

**21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**

**"God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself"**

Reconciliation is a costly process…Reconciliation is costly because it requires forgiveness, and forgiveness always comes at a cost.

There is one eternal principle which will be valid as long as the world lasts. The principle is--Forgiveness is a costly thing. Human forgiveness is costly. A son or a daughter may go wrong; a father or a mother may forgive; but forgiveness has brought tears. ... There was the price of a broken heart to pay.

 Divine forgiveness is also costly. God is love, but God is also holy. God, least of all, can break the great moral laws on which the universe is built. Sin must have its punishment or the very structure of life disintegrates. And God alone can pay the terrible price that is necessary before men can be forgiven. Forgiveness is never a case of just saying: "It's all right; it doesn't matter." Forgiveness is the most costly thing in the world. It cost God the life of His one and only son!

**Ephe 1:7 (NIV) In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace!**

**In him we have redemption (Reconciliation) through his blood!**

The cost of our reconciliation with God was the shed blood of Christ Jesus, and it is the most costly price that has ever been paid for reconciliation.

 It is important for us to understand the cost God paid for our reconciliation with Himself and for us to understand that reconciliation will always have a price to pay because of what we have been called to as Christians….

 **2Cor 5:17 (NIV) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!**

**18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:**

**19 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.**

**20 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.**

**21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**

 It is important for us to understand reconciliation and its cost because that is what we are called to as Christians who have been reconciled with God through Christ.

 After we have been reconciled to God through Jesus Christ we are then given the message and the ministry of reconciliation.

 **And He has committed to us the message and the ministry of reconciliation!**

 The message of reconciliation that God has given us to share with others in the world in which we live is the gospel message of Jesus Christ.

 That Jesus died for our sin in order that all who come to believe in and on Him by making Him the Lord and Savior of their life may be reconciled to God!

 As Christians we all have been called to be an ambassador of Christ!

 An ambassador is one who is sent to represent another! Not to represent themselves but to represent the one that sent them.

And we have not just been committed with the message of reconciliation but we have been committed with the ministry of reconciliation as well.

 What does that mean? It means that we, ourselves, are to be reconcilers just as Jesus was a reconciler.

 The ministry of our life, after we come to Christ, is to be a ministry of reconciliation. We are to live a life of reconciliation ourselves.

 Live a life of reconciling ourselves, one to another.

Husbands need to be reconciling themselves to their wives and wives to their husbands. Parents need to be reconciling themselves to their children and children to their parents.

 We need to reconcile ourselves with one another within the body of Christ.

 We need to be reconcilers in our homes, in our work environments and in the marketplace and everywhere that we are..

 This is what Jesus meant when He said in:

**Matt 5:23 (NIV) "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you,**

**24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.**

-- Bill Bright, founder and president of Campus Crusade for Christ shares this story.

 “I knew two law partners who used to hate each other.

 When one became a Christian, he asked me, "Now that I'm a Christian, what should I do?"

 I said, "Why not ask your partner to forgive you and tell him you love him?"

 "I could never do that!" he said, "because I don't love him."

 That lawyer had put his finger squarely on one of the great challenges of the Christian life: On the one hand, everybody wants to be loved, but on the other hand, many people never experience it. That's why we need to learn to love as Christ loves--unconditionally.

 We can't manufacture that kind of love. It only comes from God; and it's a love that draws people to Christ.

 He said, I prayed with that attorney. The next morning, he told his partner, "I've become a Christian, and I want to ask you to forgive me for all I've done to hurt you, and to tell you that I love you."

 The partner was so surprised and convicted that he, too, asked for forgiveness and said, "I would like to become a Christian. Would you tell me how?"

 Folks, this is what having the ministry of reconciliation is all about.

 This lawyer learned what it meant to be called by God, to not just be given the message of reconciliation, but to be given the ministry of reconciliation as well.

 Many times, as Christians we may embrace the message of reconciliation, that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ not counting men’s sins against them, but we fall flat on our face when it comes to administering the ministry of reconciliation whereby we become reconcilers ourselves.

 For us to become a reconciler will require us to do something that is very often hard for us to do and that is to forgive others who may have wronged or hurt us.

 Yet that is exactly what we have been called to as a Christian!

 We have been called to the ministry of reconciliation!

 To be a reconciler ourselves just as Jesus was a reconciler.

 To do that will require us to be forgiving…

It will necessitate our willingness to forgive others just as Jesus forgave us.

 Reconciliation always requires forgiveness. No one can be reconciled without forgiveness..

 Before we could ever be reconciled with God it was necessary that we first be forgiven by Him.

 In order for us to be reconciled in any of our human relationships forgiveness is also necessary..

That is why our being forgiving is necessary in our life as a Christian.

 Yet so many professing Christians think that forgiveness on their part is optional.

 If you believe as I do that the Word of God says what it means and means what it says then listen to Jesus in:

**Matt 6:14 (NIV) For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.**

**15 But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.**

 According to this verse of Scripture if we are unforgiving then we are UN-forgiven…

 And if we are UN-forgiven what does that mean?

 We are still lost in our sins!

 If we profess Jesus as the Lord of our life and we have those we have not forgiven then we need to examine our faith.

Because the Word of God says… **if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.**

And if our sins are not forgiven then we are still lost!

**Mark 11:25 (NIV) And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."**

Notice the two words that Jesus uses here…

**Anything and anyone!**

 **If you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."**

So true forgiveness by God is contingent upon true forgiveness on our part.

 Well, I thought that we are saved by Gods grace and His grace alone….

 We are but it is not cheap grace! It cost God a great price!

 And if that grace is genuinely received in our life, it will require an adequate response on our part….

The only adequate response to Gods tremendous grace of forgiveness in our lives is to become forgiving, become forgivers, ourselves! To literally become administrators of the forgiveness by which we have been forgiven…

 Peter really struggled with the forgiveness that a ministry of Reconciliation would require….

**Matt 18:21 (NIV) Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?"**

**22 Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.**

Then Jesus goes on to illustrate this forgiveness that we have been called to with a parable…

**23 "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.**

**24 As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him.**

**25 Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.**

**26 "The servant fell on his knees before him. `Be patient with me,' he begged, `and I will pay back everything.'**

**27 The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.**

**28 "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. `Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded.**

**29 "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, `Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.'**

**30 "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt.**

**31 When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened.**

**32 "Then the master called the servant in. `You wicked servant,' he said, `I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to.**

**33 Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?'**

**34 In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.**

**35 "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."**

 In short, forgiveness is essential in reconciliation!

 No forgiveness-no reconciliation!

 Our universal calling as a Christian, as a Christ like one, is to have a ministry of reconciliation…

 That will require us to forgive just as we have been forgiven.

 How does God forgive us? Totally and completely with no strings attached…

 Can we do that in and of ourselves? No!

 But we are not to live in and of ourselves any longer when we come to Christ---We are to allow Him to live His life in and through us! And He can do it! He proved that when He forgave us and reconciled us to Himself!

 This morning, have you been reconciled with God?

 If so, have you accepted the ministry that God has called you to, a ministry that largely defines who you are in Christ, the ministry of reconciliation?

Are you forgiving just as you have been forgiven?

If we claim the name of Christ then forgiveness is not an option, something that we choose to do, but it is, in fact, a vital part of who and what we are to be…

 Folks, it was your and my sins that nailed Jesus to the cross! Our sin placed Him there!

 If there is someone in your life that you are having a hard time forgiving, someone who you feel has wronged you so much that you can’t forgive, then just picture Jesus hanging on that cross, placed there because of your and my sin and hear Him speak His dying words to you..

Father, forgive them-for they know not what they do…

 Hear Jesus call out to the Father on your behalf---father forgive terry, forgive Perry, forgive June, forgive Don, forgive Pam….

 And then hear the resurrected Jesus say to you; now go and forgive just as you have been forgiven…I give you My message and ministry of reconciliation!

 **18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:**

**19 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.**

**20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.**

Prayer…..