

BUMC Weekly Bible and Sermon Study

Sermon: “Ministry of Reconciliation” from the “Called Together” sermon series

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Key take-aways from the Scripture

- This section of 2 Corinthians discusses the ministry of reconciliation (God bringing us back to Himself), and how we are transformed to be a new creation with our faith in Christ.
- Verse 17 says, “So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; look, new things have come into being!” The Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible explains, “Although later teachers sometimes applied it to proselytes, the most common use of new creation language in Jewish sources from this period addresses the age to come...Paul recognizes that the promised resurrection has begun in Jesus, so that believers have already begun to experience some of the life of the promised age.”
- Verses 18-19 read, “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.” The Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible says, “Harmony and thus reconciliation were frequent topics of public discussion” during this time period.
- Verse 20 reads, “So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ: be reconciled to God.” Being an “ambassador” is being in a role to represent one country to another. Here, we are ambassadors for Christ going forth with a message of reconciliation for the world!
- Verse 21 says, “For our sake God made the one who knew no sin to be sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” This is a key verse, in that it explains that when we have faith in Christ, our sin is taken away from us, and we are made right with God. In other words, our sinful nature is substituted for Christ’s sinless and perfect nature. The righteousness of Christ is given to us at our conversion, and God sees this in us rather than our old sinful nature.

Key take-aways from the Sermon

- During this series, we have been examining our common call as disciples of Christ. We are called together to: (1) worship and praise God; (2) spiritual formation; (3) today we focus on our common call to *reconciliation*.
- Reconciliation is defined as restored favor or restored friendship. It is the work of God: we cannot restore ourselves; God restores us through Christ.
- “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, not counting our sins against us.” -2 Corinthians 5:18. Christ dies for us *all!*
- When we are reconciled to God, we are no longer live only for ourselves. The self-centered life is replaced with the Christ-centered life.
- Passing of the peace: this is not a passive gesture, rather, it is a bold act of declaring reconciliation is happening between us, God and one another.
- When we are reconciled to God, we no longer regard others from a “worldly” point of view.
- A “tribal” mind is a troubled mind. Never judge a book by its cover.
- When we encounter someone who does not live up to our “standards”, say to yourself, “He/She is someone for whom Christ died.” This is all we need to know!
- We are no longer recipients of reconciliation; we are agents of reconciliation! We are considered “Christ’s Ambassadors”!
- As an ambassador, you never represent yourself but the values, culture and the policies from where you come from. The honor of a country is in the hands of the ambassadors! People often evaluate the nation through the conduct of an ambassador!
- The task for us to be Ambassadors of Christ is not to just represent the church, but to be the church! To be the hands of Christ in the world in a way that restores favor and reconciles others.
- “Take my hands, Lord Jesus, let them work for you. Make them strong and gentle, and kind in all that I do. Let me watch you Jesus, until I am gentle too. Until my hands are kind hands, quick to work for you.” -*Excerpt from a hymn by Margaret Cropper*

Questions for Personal Reflection or Group Discussion

- What were your key take-aways from the sermon? How can you apply this to your everyday life?
- What does it mean that we become a new creation in Christ? How does this differ from being “reformed”, “reeducated”, or “turning over a new leaf”? In what ways has this happened in your life?
- What does it mean for God to reconcile us to Himself? How does having faith in Christ play into this?
- What does it mean to be an “ambassador for Christ”?
- What is reconciliation?
- What does it mean to be reconciled with God? With one another?
- Why is it sometimes hard for us to worship God when we are at odds with our neighbor?
- What does Rev. Dr. Chappelle mean by, “When we are reconciled to God, we no longer regard others from a “worldly” point of view.”?
-

