

Sermon for June 28, 2015 – 5th Sunday after Pentecost

2 Corinthians 5:14-21 (NIV84)

Theme: **Why should you care about telling other people about Christ?**

- 1) Because God reconciled the world to himself in Christ.
- 2) Because the message of God's love for us in Christ changes hearts.
- 3) Because God has made you His ambassador.

¹⁴ For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. ¹⁵ And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. ¹⁶ So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. ¹⁷ 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.

“Why should I tell other people about Jesus? If I don't like it when others try to force their religion on me, what gives me the right to tell other people what they should believe? Isn't their faith between God and them alone?”

Let me answer those questions with an illustration: Imagine, as part of a one-day, special promotion, a bank gave \$100 to every person who appeared at one of their branches. Your friend knew about this promotion, but you didn't and missed out. To make matters worse, your friend knew that you needed the money. When you ask your friend why he didn't tell you about the promotion, he answers: “You wouldn't have believed me anyway. Besides: your financial problems are none of my business. I'm not responsible for you; you're responsible for yourself.”

What would you think if your friend answered in that way? Not much of a friend, is he? And neither are you if you refrain from telling others the wonderful news of Christ that gives eternal life to all who believe it.

With the apostle Paul as our guide, let us learn the answer to the question: **Why should you care about telling other people about Jesus?** *1) Because God reconciled the world to himself in Christ. 2) Because the message of God's love for us in Christ changes hearts. 3) Because God has made you His ambassador.*

Part One: Because God reconciled the world to himself in Christ.

Many people thought that the apostle Paul and his companions were out of their minds for preaching the Gospel – but that didn't stop them from doing it. Why not? Our sermon text tells us:

Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.

When we recite the statement, “Jesus died for the sins of the world,” do we always take to heart what it means?

You see, mankind's sinfulness is not some minor thing that can be easily fixed. It is so deeply rooted in our nature that God says that every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood. The Bible says there is not a single good person on this earth – not even one. All people are basically selfish and self-serving - constantly questioning and rebelling against God's righteous commands.

This is the reason why there is pain, suffering and death in the world. Our consciences bear witness: God hates sin. Whether we agree to it or not, eternal death in hell is the just punishment every one deserves from our righteous God.

But here is the amazing thing: The LORD is not only holy and righteous, He is also loving and forgiving – taking no pleasure in the eternal death of anyone. So do you know what the LORD did? He sent his Son, Jesus, to reconcile the world to Himself.

The word “reconcile” literally means to “bring back together.” In a financial sense of the term it means balancing accounts – transferring funds if needed. In a relational sense of the word, it means bringing people, who were once friends but now enemies, back together in harmony.

God created mankind in his image: perfect and holy like him. Sadly, when Adam and Eve fell into sin, a break took place in our relationship with God. Mankind lost the righteousness with which God created us, incurring spiritual debt with God. The Bible says: *the wages of sin is death*. In other words “our death” is the only way the balance of our sins could be paid off.

Now, since death is the only thing that can still God's anger and satisfy His justice, what hope can we have? If left to ourselves: none! But, as I mentioned before, God loves us and did not want to leave us without hope. This is why He took it upon Himself to save us, as we read: *God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them*.

But how could God do this? Did He just forget about all the horrible sins everyone committed through-out time? His just nature would not allow that! No, the only way He could reconcile the world to himself was by allowing his Son to pay the debt of “death” every person's sin had earned.

And so, as the last verse of our text tells us: *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God*. In other words when the LORD looked down at sinless Jesus on the cross, He did not see his Son; He saw every person that ever existed regardless of whether they lived like Mother Theresa or Hitler. When God looked at Jesus, he saw all of humanity and punished His Son for them all. *One died for all, and therefore all died*. The death God's justice needed to pay for our sins has been paid. All humanity has been reconciled to God!

Isn't this wonderful news? There is not a single person who has ever or will ever live on this earth whose sin Christ has not paid for in full. There is no reason to be afraid of God. There is no reason to ignore His call to turn to Him in repentance and faith. God loves everybody and He proved it by reconciling the world to Himself in Christ!

Part Two: Because the message of God's love for us in Christ changes hearts.

“Well,” someone might say, “if God reconciled the world to himself in Christ, doesn't this mean all people are saved in will go to heaven – regardless of whether or not I tell them about Jesus?”

Let me answer this question with an illustration: On September 2, 1945 the Japanese formally surrendered

to the allies on the USS Missouri. Peace existed between the Allies and Japan, and yet a number of Japanese soldiers fought and died after this peace treaty was signed. Why? Because they either did not hear or believe that peace was declared. They were convinced that they were still at war with the Allies and fought against them bitterly.

The point I am trying to make is this: the reconciliation God won for mankind in Christ doesn't do anyone any good if a person doesn't believe it. And what makes matters worse is that the human heart is so corrupt that it doesn't even want to hear about the reconciliation God offers us through the Gospel. The human heart is content to live selfishly - fulfilling its own desires and making its own rules. It does not want the LORD as its God.

Oh, how lost we would be if it were not for the saving faith the LORD awakened in our hearts by means of the Gospel! The fact that anyone of us believes is a miracle – for wherever God's Law and Gospel is preached, there the Holy Spirit is present to awaken repentance and faith in the heart of the listener. Our sermon text describes a believer as being *a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

What is the old that is gone? It's the mind set and desires that only want to serve self instead of others! What is the new that has come? Our text explains it: *[Christ] died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer.*

What the apostle Paul means is this: because Jesus died for us we don't want to live like the rest of the world - using people (and even Christ himself) for our earthly advantage. No. Rather, because of the saving love Jesus expressed to us through His cross, we want to serve our neighbor for his advantage. Instead of getting impatient when other people annoy us, we work in all patience with them – praying for them and witnessing Christ's love through our words and actions.

Faith in Jesus changes us. Some of the news reports coming out of Charleston emphasize this fact, as we hear that many family members of the victims of that horrible church shooting are praying for the perpetrator's forgiveness and salvation! What could motivate them to do this after being hurt so deeply? Only the love God has for them in Christ. He reconciled the world to himself and made us beneficiaries of this reconciliation by awakening faith in our hearts through the Gospel! Seeing how much God has done for you, doesn't that make you want to share the message of His love with the world? It should. Why? Because the Holy Spirit has called you to be His ambassador!

Part Three: Because God has made you His ambassador.

God loves the people of our world. He does not want them to perish in their sin and unbelief, but that they turn to him in repentance and faith. This is why he wants His Gospel shared – and He can think of no better way of sharing it than having us proclaim it. St. Paul writes: *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.*

Could you imagine a rich anthropologist giving you 10 million dollars to distribute in Kewaunee to those who are in need? Doing that would be hard work, but you would agree that being entrusted with such a privilege would be quite an honor, wouldn't it?

Well, God has entrusted us with something far more precious than money: He has entrusted us with His soul-saving Gospel. He sees that the people in are community are in need of the salvation He won through Christ's cross. He wants you to realize it too. The LORD has given you His Word to call your family, friends and neighbors to repentance and faith. He wants you to offer eternal salvation to all.

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.

Just think: the almighty God of the universe makes an appeal to fallen mankind as we implore people to be reconciled to God through faith in the Gospel. Don't you sense the urgency and love God has for this fallen world in this description of our duty? He truly does not want anyone lost in hell.

Brothers and sisters in Christ: do you truly love your family, friends and neighbors – so much so that you do not want them lost to hell? Then tell them about Jesus. Why? Because God reconciled the world to himself in Christ, because the Gospel message of this great love changes hearts, and because God has given you the great honor of being his ambassador in the world. May the LORD help us fulfill this wonderful privilege of rescuing others by faithfully doing all we can to spread the good news of Jesus. Amen.