

## The Gift of Reconciliation

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### 2 Corinthians 5: 17-21

**17** So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! **18** All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; **19** that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself,<sup>[a]</sup> not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. **20** 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. **21** For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

- Short intro about myself
  - Emma, 3rd yr, grew up in rural northern Wisconsin, joined ELCA church in high school
    - Queerer, more radical and more religious
- Short insert about LCM
  - A place that honors conversation and affirms differences in beliefs in ways that prompt us to engage in small acts of reconciliation every day.

### About passage:

Admittedly, I really struggled with today's readings when I first saw them. Though I am sure that there is good to be taken from Luke 15, our gospel reading, I can't help but feeling that its story lacks significance, lacks oomph – for lack of a better word.

The younger brother is an example of greed, squandering his family's money for no good but his own. His father allows him back home with open arms, the love of a parent as representation of the love of God. While I do not like to see people suffer, I wonder if the younger brother was even made to repent, or if his father turned the other cheek with no care for his selfishness. But perhaps this story is that simple, and maybe that's alright. This was a very wealthy family, so for the younger brother to squander his inheritance is inherently trivial, at least I would argue this. His family did not need this money, they would live comfortably either way.

There is a bit more to this story, culturally significant themes of status that further complicate it, but in regard to how we might see this story within our own lives, I think that there is something so elementary about the idea of immediate forgiveness as a response to sin. It is not through our belief in God alone that we are let off the hook. Certainly our lives are not that easy. With Luke 15 alone, I am not compelled to understand the works of God's love and reconciliation.

But within 2 Corinthians 5, I see much more value.

In 2nd Corinthians, Paul is talking to a community of relatively new believers, the Christian people of Corinth. At the beginning of the 5th chapter Paul is discussing the home a Christian has in Christ... and within this, the calling to be ministers of reconciliation, noting that by taking up the cross, we Christians are to live not just for ourselves but for our creator who died for us and was raised again.

Historical context

- 1st and 2nd corinthians are a collection of letters to the people of corinth
- in this chapters specifically, paul is defending his ministry to the people of Corinth
- He is old and beat up, obvious that it has taken a significant toll on his life
- so many cannot see what good it has done for him, or why he is even qualified to preach about jesus
- He is a living example of putting the message and intentions of God before his own earthly desires

He says to the corinthians:

- "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation"
- Likely referring to great chrisstian teachers; martyrs, apostles

Paul has a changed perspective: because of his personal relationship with Jesus and in turn experience of reconciliation through, He now views every person as an eternal being and not merely "according to the flesh." That began when he learned Christ was more than just a man. If one is with Christ, they become more than just man, a new creation. Corinth was a community of contention. One that wasn't in social harmony, social order. Therefore, his claims were significant...

- "that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself,[a] not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us." —
- "See, everything has become new" —

And what a rightful time it is now, during the season of lent, to consider taking up the cross and fasting from evils – just as Paul suggested was necessary, just as Jesus did.

Drawing back on the gospel reading, I suppose that I can see how the father was a good example of reconciliation for his family, repairing brokenness, putting them back in order. But I think that we must consider other deeper stories of reconciliation alongside this. Like for Paul, reconciliation was something that he had to work for. Taking up the cross as a minister of reconciliation was not easy for Paul. As we discussed earlier, it actually took a significant toll on him.

And like Paul, we too are called to be ministers of reconciliation, challenged to take up the cross. And like any other avenue of our faith, people who strive to follow Jesus, this will not always be easy. Certainly to be a christian is not so easy as to just carry the identity. To recognize faults, take accountability and mend brokenness is a difficult set of actions that have to be done both internally and externally. We must reconcile with ourselves, with our neighbors, and with the world.