

Reconciliation.

Don't know whether you know much about the history of Rwanda? (It has been in the news recently regarding the UK flying immigrants out there to begin a new life!)

Back in 1994 nearly a million people were killed during the country's **genocide** various tribes living in the same village were pitched against each other, in a bloody war that lasted years.

A government initiative after the war was instigated involving counselling those involved and trying to bring people together again, culminating in thousands of formal request for forgiveness from the perpetrators to those they harmed. **It is a truly remarkable story of reconciliation**

I was reading about some of the stories this week.

One perpetrator said “my conscience was not quiet, and when I would saw the lady I had wronged I was very ashamed. After being trained about unity and reconciliation, I went to her house and asked for forgiveness. Then I shook her hand. So far, we are on good terms.”

NYIRAMANA THE VICTIM SAID “He killed my father and three brothers. He did these killings with other people, but he came alone to me and asked for pardon. He and a group of other offenders who had been in prison helped me build a house with a covered roof. I was afraid of him — now I have granted him pardon, things have become normal, and in my mind I feel clear.”

It made me realise the power of reconciliation when heartfelt forgiveness is evident.

I was thinking this week about reconciliation – what does it mean? One dictionary says: “a situation in which two people or groups of people become friendly again after they have argued”

Of course the Bible has much to say about reconciliation. Genesis 45 is such a moving chapter about reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers, you know the story I'm

sure? Joseph's brothers had sold him into slavery and told his father he had been killed.

But after many years in Potiphars household and much time in prison the king had put Joseph in charge of everything. There was a meeting again between Joseph and his brothers at the time there was a famine in the land. Joseph had disguised himself from them.

It says in verse 1 "Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, "Have everyone leave my presence!" So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. ² And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it"

¹⁴ Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin embraced him, weeping. ¹⁵ And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Afterward his brothers talked with him. Very moving after all he had been through at the hands of his brothers Joseph was still able to forgive and reconcile.

And of course there is the story the prodigal son, so many stories of reconciliation in the bible the truth is: when you look at the scriptures from start to finish the bible **is one giant story about reconciliation - ITS THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL**

This verse sums up what the gospel is all about.

2 Corinthians 5:19

"Namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation"

However here's the rub! when you look at our broken world, our society, there is conflict everywhere, between countries, between people, our divorce rates, in families.

Strikes & conflicts on the railways, with Postal Workers, Barristers, Teachers, and now Refuse Workers are we moving into another winter of discontent?

So reconciliation is desperately needed.

So want to look at 4 things about reconciliation this morning.

Firstly in reconciliation we need to get our priorities right!

2 Corinthians 5:18 “*Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation*”

The problem with man is he always gets things the wrong way around! He thinks he can sort things out without first acknowledging God.

The problem is stated clearly in our verse: **Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ** and gave us the ministry of reconciliation

We first have to be reconciled to God before we can be reconciled to our fellow man.

This is the starting place, the foundation of everything.

He (man) thinks he can live at peace with himself with his neighbour **without first being at peace with God.**

What's more doesn't even believe he needs to be at peace with God! It's a question of priorities and who you put first in your life, in our world.

Take the 2 greatest commandments;

Firstly 'love the Lord your God with your heart mind and soul' and then secondly 'love your neighbour as yourself' but what does man do? **He first try's to love his neighbour as himself without first loving God.**

The truth is He (man) doesn't want God in the equation anyway! But firstly you have to be reconciled to God and then and only then can you be reconciled to man.

The one flows from the other but you have to get your priorities right.

It is why the earth is as it is – **our problems are not political but spiritual and they all stem from this basic error.**

We have to be absolutely clear in the Church about what Christian reconciliation is and what the priority is - without this we can't move forward.

This is at the heart of real reconciliation. And the root of mans conflict.....

John 3:3: “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” - **Without the blood of Christ there is no reconciliation - full stop.**

So firstly it's getting our priorities right - you want peace? You want to be reconciled to your brother? It starts here first, **by being reconciled to God.** If you're not reconciled your on sinking sand.

Secondly true Reconciliation comes with an understanding of why we need to reconciled

And most people don't! They don't see they are in any conflict at all - not realising because of sin there is a great chasm between themselves and God. Not realising that until that chasm is bridged. There is NO reconciliation - **they are enemies of God.**
(Romans 5:10)

Let me briefly talk on this again – the area of sin.

It begins with two people named Adam and Eve who lived in perfect peace with God and each other. They lived in a perfect world. But something happened that plunged the world into the conflict that we are still fighting today. It is the cause of every single problem on this planet.

Deep down there is something within all of us that knows something is not right with our world. Deep down we know this place is not what it should be or even what it was meant to be.

We see evil in the world. We see the moral evil of terrorism, war, crime, and injustice... We see social evil like poverty, hunger, and homelessness. There is something wrong in our world.

Then we look at our own heart and know there is something wrong with us. Why do we do things that we know we shouldn't do? Why do we not do things that we know we should do? (Romans 7) Why are we always falling short even of our own self-prescribed standards of decency and righteousness? **What is wrong with us?**

The problem is sin and it separates and destroys. It destroyed humanity's relationship with God, it destroys relationships between people, and it destroys us individually.

According to the Bible, sin came about because the first humans (Adam and Eve) disobeyed Him. In Genesis (2:15-17) God told Adam not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and warned him if he did he would die.

The word "die" (death) means separation. God was telling Adam if he disobeyed he would be separated from Him

This one act of disobedience **destroyed the perfect relationship between God and man, and affected all of humanity** (Roman 5:12). Because God is our loving Heavenly Father He did not leave us in our separated and destructive condition. He did something about it. He provided a Way to restore our relationship.

That is by reconciliation with Him and a way for us not to have to live with sin's destructive consequences.

And here's the greatest reconciliation available TO MAN.....

Now, rather than seeing us as enemies, Christ calls us "friends" (John 15:15). Jesus is our peace; He is our mediator who makes us right with God. "Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).

So secondly to be reconciled to God and man you need to humbly see your need. As the scriptures say: I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."(Luke 5:32)

Thirdly Reconciliation / Forgiveness need to be a 2 way thing.

Forgiveness does not mean that we are reconciled to God though. Restoring a relationship requires something from both sides of the broken relationship. It requires a desire for restoration. And then acting on that desire.

For God's part, he has forgiven me for my rebellion against him. But He goes beyond that. He actively calls us, draws the sinner back to himself. **But forgiveness and reconciliation must be RECIEVED.**

Restoring a cracked relationship is like mending a broken arm. If your arm is broken you take initiative to get to a doctor so he can set it, put a cast on it, so healing can take place. (Luke 5:31)

Broken relationships, like broken arms, are never mended accidentally. They require purposeful and intentional action. God has taken the initiative through Christ but there has to be a response on our part.

So thirdly reconciliation and forgiveness is a 2 way thing.

Fourthly reconciliation is a ministry we are all called to as Christians - and forgiveness is mandatory!

2 Corinthians 5:18-21 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".

Do you want to know your ministry? It is to be a reconciler? A man or woman who actively tries to bring peace between man & God. That is the calling we all have as Christians. **If you're in Christ you have the ministry of reconciliation.**

We now take the gospel to a dying world, saying, "We implore you on behalf of Christ, and be reconciled to God" **but again it is because Christ first loved us.**

God wants us all to take on the role of reconcilers / peacemakers in our world.

But remember we do that knowing we have no choice but to forgive!

I will end with this and it's a sobering reminder of our commitment to forgive.

Matthew 18 :((23-35)

"Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. ^[h] ²⁵And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made.

²⁶So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' ²⁷And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.

²⁸But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, ^[i] and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.'

²⁹So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' ³⁰He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. ³¹When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place.

³²Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?'

³⁴And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, ^[k] until he should pay all his debt. ³⁵So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

So in Conclusion regarding reconciliation:-

1. Firstly we need to get our priorities right - be reconciled to God first and if we sin always Go to him first then our neighbour - remember this is the sure foundation put God first in everything and we won't go far wrong.
2. Secondly if you're in Christ you have become a friend of God. The barrier wall of sin has been broken down. If you haven't now is the day to be reconciled to God because (as we heard thirdly) forgiveness and reconciliation is a 2 way thing.

“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me”. (Rev 3:20)

3. And finally we have the most glorious calling on all our lives! because “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ **and gave us the ministry of reconciliation**: that's our evangelistic mission - Lets go out there and do everything in our power to reconcile men and women to God

Personal testimony.....

Amen

Tony Troy

2.10.2022