



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

[www.mzluth.org](http://www.mzluth.org)

July 10, 2011

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Sermon Text: [Romans 4:18-25](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Exodus 19:2-8a](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 100](#)

Second Lesson: [Romans 5:6-11](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 9:35-10:8](#)

### **The Christian Faith, One Word at a Time: *Reconciliation***

Have you ever noticed children playing together and all of a sudden it explodes into this great disagreement and argument about something? Sometimes it seems like almost just as suddenly they can be laughing and having fun again. They tear into each other and then they forgive each other and make peace between each other and go on playing together. Did you ever notice that? They get over it a lot quicker than the parents do at times watching them fight.

We aren't quite as good at that as we get older, are we? We have a tendency to hang onto things a lot longer, don't we? We get upset with people because they say something to us or about us, or we keep trying to do things for them and they don't seem to appreciate it, or we keep inviting them and they don't come. We can kind of drive a wedge between us at times with some of the things that happen between us. But we aren't quite so good at just forgetting about it and moving on or making peace between us and them, are we?

That's what we are talking about today... making peace, peace between people that have a problem that are dividing them. Those kids that would fight on the playground, they make peace and move on pretty quickly. We don't. We hang onto it. What's really weird is that we have the ability to do something about it. We can go talk to that person. Either side can go and talk to them. I don't know how often this has happened in my ministry where people have come to me and talked to me about the problems they are having between them and a sibling or someone else. They just won't talk anymore, and they say, "Pastor, what should we do?" Forgive each other and move on is kind of the answer, but it's the thing we don't want to do, right?

We don't want to reconcile. We don't want to make peace between us. Sometimes we are such fools that we like to hang onto the bitterness and the anger. For some reason we seem to like it. I've told you before, sin doesn't make us bright. This is more evidence of it.

The reconciliation, the making peace between... the word we are looking at today as we continue to look at Romans and take the Christian faith one word at a time, kind of like Paul's Bible information class, the word we are looking at is "reconciliation." Look at the nature of what he is teaching us about this word today when it comes to the problem that is there between us and God. If I have a problem with you or you've got a problem

with me, we can come to each other and talk. But this reconciliation between us and God is completely different. We can do nothing.

The first sentence in this reading that we have here from Romans 5 kind of slaps you up a little, doesn't it? The "we," that would be all of us, are powerless, ungodly and sinners. That's what he calls us time and time again in here. He's telling us we were powerless. We couldn't come to God and make things right. We were ungodly. We weren't all that we think of ourselves. The other person is always the ungodly one. Paul is telling us, it's you, it's me, it's us, it's each of us. Sinners... we have nothing to offer God. We can't make things right with God. That's kind of scary because it's God's heaven. He is the one who decides who gets into his heaven. And if we're separated from him and we're powerless, we're in trouble.

This is the beauty of the word "reconciliation" that's here for us in Scripture today. It's all about God. It's all about him. It's all about what he has done. He tells us when we were powerless, ungodly and sinners, Christ died for us. He left heaven and became one of us. He lived perfectly in our place and then died in our place. Paul makes the point that the Greek mind would understand, that not many people would die for a unrighteous man, maybe for a good man or a noble man or a noble cause you might be willing to die, but not for someone that is your enemy, not for someone that has made your life miserable, not for someone that makes you feel like you are sitting on a tack when you're in their presence. But that's what he says God did for us. We are the tack that is in God's backside in his presence. We are the ones that have made his life miserable. We are the ones that have offended against him. We are the ones that have nothing to offer him. Yet his love for us is so deep and so great and so rich that while we were in this state, he died for us. That's one of the points Paul has been making over and over.

He had shown how we are all sinners, Jew and Gentile alike. He had shown the only righteousness that avails before God is the righteousness God gives, and he said that we've been declared not guilty. Now he is saying at the start of Chapter 5, because of all this, we now have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And he started to talk about the difference this peace makes in our life. In the verses shortly before this, he had just made, what to many people's ears at that time and I think yet today, an outrageous statement. Because we have peace with God, we rejoice in our sufferings. That's what he said in verse 3.

I have to believe in some way, on some level, and at some time in your life, each one of us has suffered in a way that as we sit, as we are enduring it, as it's painful and as it hurts, either physically or emotionally, we are tempted to say, "God, where are you? Why would you let this happen to me? Don't you love me, God?" Paul's trying to make a point that as Christians, because we have peace with God, we can rejoice in suffering. That doesn't mean we are giddy and we're giggling. It means we have a joy that's not dependent on outward circumstances.

Now he's making the point as to why we can have this joy that seems so outrageous and so unbelievable. It's because God has made peace between us and him. If he did that while we were sinners, while we were his enemy, if he did that for us while we were the problem, now that he has made us his children through faith, now that he has given us the gift of faith, now that he has poured out his blood over us to cover us and forgive us, do you really think he's going to abandon you now and stop loving you just because you are enduring some difficulty?

You live in a sinful world. A sinful world means there are going to be problems. There is going to be heartache. There is going to be hardship. It does not mean that God doesn't love you. It means Adam and Eve screwed up, and you and I screw up and sin against our God. Sometimes we endure suffering because of sin in the world. Sometimes, we have to be honest, we endure suffering because of our own sin. As Christians, he's telling us don't think it's because God doesn't love you. 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.

God won't abandon us to this suffering forever. God will sustain us and bring us through it. He's going to go on, and he talks about the benefit of suffering in Chapter 5 in those verses that we didn't look at, about how it produces character and perseverance and it produces hope. Because in our suffering, if we learn to look more closely at our God and rely on him, we are going to be leaning on the fact that God loved us so much he took away our sins while we were his enemy. That love of God will sustain us through anything we go through in life. But it will do it when we are close to that love, when we are close to his Word, when we are close to his sacraments, when we are going back to our baptism, when we are going to his body and blood in the Lord's Supper and being assured there is peace between me and God. I am forgiven. I am loved.

If you think that's just the same old same old, wake up. This is what sustains us through all the junk we have to endure. This is the answer. You and I know it. You and I rejoice in it. We'll come sit in a warm church because we love our God, because we want to hear of his love.

Now here is the truly great thing that you and I get to do. Because we have been reconciled to God, one of the fruits of that reconciliation, of that peace between us and God, is that now you and I have an ability that the unbeliever doesn't have. You and I have the ability to do what we say. What do we say all the time? When we pray the Lord's Prayer, what do we pray? Forgive us, as we forgive those who trespass against us. God has forgiven our sins in the same way we want to forgive others. He has reconciled us to himself in the same way we can be reconciled to others. We can forgive. We can put away the hurt. Christians that tell me, "I can't forgive." I worry about them. How can you pray the Lord's Prayer and say, "I can't forgive that person"?

God looked at us while we were sinners and he loved us that much. There isn't anyone who has done anything close to what we've done to God. We have a power unlike any other. That power is the Gospel of Christ. It covers us and it moves us. Be moved by God's love.