

Sunday 28th November 2021

My friend boarded a train at London Bridge, and a very well built young man comes up to her (seeing her collar) and asks if he can tell her his story....

Sure, she says, my name's Lisa and you are? 'I can't tell you my name - when you hear what I've got to say and I'm glad of these masks' - he goes on to speak of growing up in a family of faith in South London but street culture drew him right away and it led to him receiving a 35 year life sentence (she's praying frantically at this point as they are the only two in the carriage so far).

He says that in prison during break times he started to read the bible, he read it quickly cover to cover, then decided to read it again slowly digesting and savouring it, he says he can't believe that nobody has ever told him all the wonders and wisdom in Proverbs... in the OT ...and in NT.

He said he received a letter inviting him to put forward an appeal, within 30 days, to reduce his sentence and his solicitor urges him to ask for early release. However, the he sensed God saying, 'I am holding you' and he decides not to lodge an appeal.

He said, in the next those thirty days God showed him His love and presence with him, in book after book of the bible. He said it was staggeringly wonderful how God loves us... with that the train pulled into East Croydon, the unnamed man got up saying 'I wish I had more time to tell you...' and he left the train!!!

That man was living out the reconciliation we receive from God and my friend, Lisa, was a living ambassador for Christ.

READING

2 Corinthians 5:14-21

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, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here! 18 All this 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 people'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.

Reconciled to God and an Ambassador for Christ

The church in Corinth struggled; surrounded by idolatry and immorality, the church – the people – struggled with their Christian faith and lifestyle. Paul had already written to them – first Corinthians was sent to deal with specific moral issues in the church. But there were false teachers who denied Paul's authority and were a constant threat to the gospel and the early church, so Paul had to spend time warning and correcting the church in Corinth.

Paul wrote the second letter to help the church grow and mature and reminds them of the gospel and urging them not to turn away from the truth.

We have here, in chapter 5, one of the many passages that can summarise the gospel.

Be reconciled to God and be an ambassador for Christ

God is a God of Reconciliation

He longs for us all to be reconciled to Him and to one another.

The word reconciled means

- to bring together
- to restore relationship
- to be in harmony with.

It's **Tov Me'od** living – **Tov Me'od** means to be in harmony with...

In harmony with God, in harmony with one another

In Genesis, right at the beginning, at creation, God said at the end of each day, 'it was good' and then at the end of the sixth day, God looked at everything He had made and it was 'very good'.

In Hebrew, the words for very good are, **Tov Me'od** – and they mean 'to be in harmony with....'

Creation was 'very good' and was created in harmony with each other – the day, night, trees, plants, animals, sea, birds, humankind.... all in harmony with each other.

God says, after creating us in His image, it is 'very good', it is **Tov Me'od**... We are created in harmony with God – creation and humankind in harmony with God and with one another.

And we see, when we read through scripture, when we read God's story, we see at every turn and junction, in every situation and relationship, God restoring and reconciling us into **Tov Me'od** lives, reconciling us to Himself.

Relationship is the foundation of who we are and how we live. We do best in life when our relationships are healthy, and so we need the reconciling love and power of Jesus to give us that life in all its fullness.

This is all about being a disciple of Christ and I want to remind you being a disciple is firstly about who you are, it's about being, before it about doing.

Society focuses on achievement and success first and so we often also make that the primary emphasis of our Christian lifestyle. We grade ourselves and others on what we do, before we remember that we are.

I am a child of God

I am unconditionally loved by God

I am adopted into God family

I am restored into relationship with God, through Jesus on the cross

I am.... Before I do...

My identity in Christ and who I am as a disciple of Christ is a noun before it is a verb.

I am a disciple of Christ

I am a new creation in Christ

¹⁸ All this from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ....

So what about reconciliation?

Why is it so important?

Why do we need this reconciliation? Because we mess up and fracture and break that perfect, wonderful, safe ***Tov Me'od*** relationship with God and we need to be rescued and brought back together and restored into relationship with God and with one another.

Are there areas of your life that need the reconciling love of Jesus to restore you to life in all its fullness.

Without it, life will be a mess; it will be uncomfortable and unhappy; upset will be a regular feature.

If you have never been reconciled to Jesus, I invite you to do that today. To ask Jesus, the one who saves and rescues us from our sin and restores us into relationship with Him. Don't leave this building, without asking more about Jesus and why millions of Christians profess Him as Lord of their lives and receive life in all its fullness.

'Forgiveness,' says Bible teacher Warren Wiersbe, 'is the greatest miracle that Jesus ever performs. It meets the greatest need; it costs the greatest price; and it brings the greatest blessing and the most lasting results.'

When Jesus – God Himself in flesh – died on the cross for all, He reconciled the world, that's you and me, to Himself. He restored us into relationship with Himself and enabled us to be restored to one another.

Therefore, our sins are not counted against us and we are a new creation in Christ. That is reconciliation.

God's extravagant, unconditional love shown for us on the cross, as well as bringing forgiveness and restoration, unites us together as the body of Christ.

We are reconciled to one another through Jesus.

We are the body of Christ.

Before we go onto part two of this reading, let's pause and respond to this call to be reconciled to God and to one another.

I know we have confessed our sin already in the service, and I am not saying you need to repent of the same things again – what you have confessed has been forgiven – God has dealt with that.

Yet is there a relationship that needs naming before God and reconciling?

In the silence, bring those things to God and ask him to reconcile you with Him and with one another.

This is often not easy and usually not instant.... It is essential that we start by naming it before God and allowing the forgiveness and grace of Jesus to wash over you.

PAUSE

And the apostle Paul reminds us that God has given us the responsibility of being ambassadors of that ministry of reconciliation

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here! 18 All this 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 people'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.

Once we know the power and peace of true reconciliation, we are called to live that out, to be Christ's ambassadors.

An ambassador is an official, authorised representative

An ambassador is of the highest rank

An ambassador represents the one who has sent them

An ambassador is authorised to speak on behalf of the sender

If we have accepted Jesus as Lord of our lives, if we profess Him as our Lord and saviour, we are called to be His ambassadors.

To be an ambassador we need to be **rooted** in who we are called to represent.

It's a scriptural image

Rooted in Christ

- ***Colossians 2:7*** ***'Let your roots grow down into Him, and let our lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth...'***
- ***Ephesians 3:17*** (in the middle of Paul's fantastic prayer for the church) he prays... ***'that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ and to know this love....'***

Deep roots.... Roots that are secure in Christ.

How do we get deep roots?

- Read scripture
- Home Groups
- Prayer (alone and with others)
- Fellowship
- Getting involved

The question now is very simple....

How are am I doing being an ambassador of Christ?

How are you doing being an ambassador of Christ?

How am I doing being an ambassador for Christ...

- In climate change
- For justice
- In loving God's way
- In living God's way
- In the schools
- In my workplace
- In my home
- With my family
- In how I spend my money
- In what I watch on TV

- In how much alcohol I drink
- With social media
- In my relationships

How am I doing being an ambassador for Christ?

- In using the gifts God has given me
- In getting involved in church
- In getting involved in the community
- Treasurer....
- Working with children and youth

We are **reconciled** by Christ into a **relationship** with God and we are called to **be an ambassador for Jesus**.

Firstly, live in the reconciled ***Tov Me'od*** relationship God has bought us into

Secondly, live out the calling He has placed on YOUR life – and that will look different for each of us.

What kingdom work has God laid on your heart?

What gifts has he given you to partner with Him in that kingdom work?

Remember God will equip you to do His work; the Holy Spirit will equip and enable you to do the work He is calling you to do.

Giving of your time and talents within TRINITY and in the community

Be a **bold ambassador** for Christ

As disciples of Christ, we are called to be distinctively different, to be salt in the world, to be light in the world. **To live out that reconciliation we receive from Christ and to be the ambassador God calls us to be.**