

Sermon Series: “New Testament Postcards” – Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—1/6/2008

Title: “Reconciling Differences”

Text: Philemon

Intro.: Ills.: Carl Sandberg’s view on reconciliation

Theme: When it comes to broken relationships, we stand equally beneath the cross and so have access to the power which heals wounds and transcends barriers and divides so that by grace we may be reconciled to each other.

The context of irreconcilable hurt (Print verses 8-11)

§ Brokenness over sin between two parties has a commonality — a need for grace

1. Because sin never deserves to be forgiven
 - a. Paul addresses a master(*Philemon*) of a runaway slave (*Onesimus*), who deserved the very worst in their culture
 - b. The context of the one who sinned against you is that they deserve punishment — but so do you
 - c. *The soul that sins, it shall die. Ezekiel 18: 4*
 - d. *There is no one righteous, not even one. . .all have turned away, they have together become worthless. Rom3:10*
 - e. **Ills.: He started it but you finished it!**
2. Because sin can only be forgiven unconditionally
 - a. *If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared. Psalm 130:3-4*
 - b. A forgiving heart is the mark of one who understands, believes in, and trusts what God has done for him or her
 - c. *"This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart." Mat 18:35*

§ Reconciliation is forgoing your right to claim your rights

1. Differentiating between the culture of the world . . .
 - a. World culture, based upon a ***pay-as-you-go system***, requires the law of equality, rules, penalties, winners/losers
2. . . and the culture of Christ, based upon the ***law of love***, requires love, mercy, sacrifice, and service
 - a. *Have this attitude within you which was also in Christ Jesus. Philippians 2: 5*
 - b. *Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment! James 2:12-13*

The art of reconciliation

§ Begin with a soft answer (**Print verses 1-7**)

1. Paul commends Philemon for his Christian faith and churchman-ship
 - a. ***Fellow-worker*** (vs. 1); ***leadership*** (church...in your home-vs. 2); ***faith and deeds*** (vs. 5); ***encouragement*** (7)
 - b. Paul sets the spiritual tone for the conversation (***Grace***-3); (***prayer***-4); (***witness*** -6)
2. First, Find something good to say and share about the individual
 - a. *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things. Philip. 4:8*

§ Get to the point!—God’s point of view (**Print verse 9-22**)

1. Don’t focus on what is wrong but on what’s good ***vs. 10, 11 – useful not useless***
2. Not obligated by rules but compelled by love ***vs. 14***
 - a. *For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. 2 Cor.5:14*
3. Not focused on ***past failures*** but on ***present realities*** and ***future possibilities vs. 16***
4. Not as a moral superior but as a partner in the good news of Jesus ***vss. 17-19***
5. Model your Christ confidence in the positive end result ***vss. 19-22***

§ Remember you are not the reconciler but the messenger

1. *All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 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. 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. 2 Cor. 5:18-20*
2. We are never told if Philemon reconciled with Onesimus
 - a. **Ills.: Lady and the Tiger story by Frank Stockton**
3. We are called to give opportunity to reconciliation processes by Jesus, the Lord of Life and Death, who backs up our efforts, to cover whatever we may be lacking in the sacrifice
 - a. *And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen. Philip. 4:19-20*

Carl Sandberg's view on reconciliation

Love your neighbor as yourself; but don't take down the fence.— **Carl Sandburg, American poet, novelist, and historian (1878–1967) Carl Sandburg, The People, Yes**

Philemon 1:1-22

¹From Paul, who is a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and our brother Timothy.

To our dear coworker Philemon, ²our sister Apphia, our fellow soldier Archippus, and the church that meets in your house. ³Grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ are yours!

⁴Philemon, I always thank my God when I mention you in my prayers because ⁵I hear about your faithfulness to the Lord Jesus and your love for all of God's people. ⁶As you share the faith you have in common with others, I pray that you may come to have a complete knowledge of every blessing we have in Christ. ⁷Your love for God's people gives me a lot of joy and encouragement. You, brother, have comforted God's people.

⁸Christ makes me bold enough to order you to do the right thing. ⁹However, I would prefer to make an appeal on the basis of love. I, Paul, as an old man and now a prisoner for Christ Jesus, ¹⁰appeal to you for my child Onesimus [Useful]. I became his spiritual father here in prison. ¹¹Once he was useless to you, but now he is very useful to both of us.

¹²I am sending him back to you. This is like sending you a part of myself. ¹³I wanted to keep him here with me. Then he could have served me in your place while I am in prison for spreading the Good News. ¹⁴Yet, I didn't want to do anything without your consent. I want you to do this favor for me out of your own free will without feeling forced to do it.

¹⁵Maybe Onesimus was gone for a while so that you could have him back forever— ¹⁶no longer as a slave but better than a slave—as a dear brother. He is especially dear to me, but even more so to you, both as a person and as a Christian.

¹⁷If you think of me as your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. ¹⁸If he wronged you in any way or owes you anything, charge it to me. ¹⁹I, Paul, promise to pay it back. I'm writing this with my own hand. I won't even mention that you owe me your life. ²⁰So, because we're brothers in the Lord, do something for me. Give me some comfort because of Christ. ²¹I am confident as I write to you that you will do this. And I know that you will do even more than I ask.

²²One more thing—have a guest room ready for me. I hope that, because of your prayers, God will give me back to you.