

RECONCILED RELATIONSHIPS
FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

2 COR 5:16-20
MAR 6, 2016

¹⁶From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. ¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

There may be someone you have known your whole life.

They went to the same school as you.

But they picked on you and took your things.

You got angry and fought with them more than once.

When you went to college, you went your separate ways.

Yet now you get together often, would do anything for them.

Why? What makes the difference?

You have same parents. It is your brother or sister.

Your relationship with your parents effects

how you look at them, how you act toward them.

Same is true of our relationship with our heavenly father.

It makes a difference in who we are

and how we relate to other people.

WHO WE ARE CHANGES RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEOPLE
GOD'S RELATIONSHIP WITH US CHANGES WHO WE ARE
CHRIST CHANGES OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.

WHO WE ARE CHANGES RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEOPLE

¹⁶From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer.

Think about how you evaluate what other people are like.

Much of it is unconscious, based on outward impression.

Researchers have found no one's face is totally symmetrical, but most symmetrical are ones that look most beautiful.

We tend to assume good looking face goes with good mind and with a kind heart as well.

It is also common to associate how people are dressed
with what they are able to do
and to assume that those who are the most wealthy
are the most able and intelligent.

Meanwhile, those with physical disabilities sometimes find
people act as if they can't hear or talk well either.

Paul warns in v. 12 of this chapter not to care about
outward appearance but not about what is in the heart.

The virtues or faults of others may be more in our own eyes
and our minds and ways of evaluating than in them.

So now think about how you treat others. This tends to be
unconsciously based on what we think of them.

When we think highly of others, we tend to treat them well
because we want them to like us & treat us well.

If we find others don't like us, we feel, "I don't like you either"

We may assume what others do makes us react as we do.

"They make me so angry!" or sad or happy.
which means we let our behavior or our personality
be controlled by others.

When we don't get along with others, we may believe
it is all because of what they are like.

A first thing to realize is that we are responsible for how we act
& how we react & how we choose to respond to others.

We have relationships we have learned how to have.

So only way to really have better relationships
is for us to be different people.

And to behave and do as we do not because of others
and what they may do or think
but because of who we are and what we are like.

And changing how we act & react changes relationships.

So, when Paul talks about regarding others, including Christ
according to the flesh, he means not only that he

judged them by their outward appearances,
but that he judged by his flesh, that is his sinful nature,
according to whether they did for him what he wanted.

But that changed, he says.

GOD'S RELATIONSHIP WITH US CHANGES WHO WE ARE

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has
passed away; behold, the new has come.

²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal

through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

What we are like makes a difference in relationships
but relationships also make a difference in us.

Those who are treated as if they are worthless or stupid
tend learn to act in worthless or stupid ways.

Those who are treated mean learn to be mean.

Those who are loved learn to be loving.

Paul says his relationship with Christ totally changed him,
it made him a new creation.

In v. 15, just before text, he wrote: he died for all
that those who live might no longer live for themselves
but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

From Christ he learned that God loved him not because of
what Paul was like but because of what God was like.

Like the first son in Jesus' parable who was treated
not according to his character or behavior
but according to the Father's loving character.

So now Paul did not have to think constantly about
what he deserved by being better than other people
and so constantly evaluating other people.

Paul learned that God made him good by taking away his sins
so now he was good and could live as a good person.

God's love for him made difference in who he was.

He was now a dear child of God with glorious future
that nothing could take away.

And he was made able to act according to who he was.

He did not need to be afraid and react with anger.

He was loved and so he was able to be loving.

This relationship with Christ changed relationship with others.

They were not competitors for God's love and blessings
but fellow creatures, loved by God.

Now his view of them was not what they could do for him
but what God could do for them & who they belonged to.

So Paul was an ambassador of God to whom he belonged.

He was like a salesman who sees everyone as customer
because he knew everyone needed what he had.

He knew Corinthians needed reconciliation with God
so they could be reconciled & get along with each other.

We need this also today.

This happens because of what Christ does for us.

CHRIST CHANGES OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.

¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation... 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.

World's way of reconciling people who don't get along
is to adjust our idea of right and wrong
so what others do is not really that bad
which means what we do is not that bad either.

But God's way of reconciling is to identify bad for what it is
but then take it away with forgiveness.

Notice Paul writes that Christ reconciled us to God
not that God reconciled himself to us.

God did not just say, "I'll have to reconcile myself to the fact
that people are sinful and live with it that way."

God is not the one who changes, but he changes us.

God always hates sin but always loves us.

It is sinners who are hostile to one who condemns their sins
and so run from the one who constantly seeks them,
and must be changed to give up on sinful ways
and come back to the loving Father.

God changes us by Christ taking away our sins.

He no longer counts our sins against us.

But this is not just on paper, like bookkeeping procedure.

Paul says not just that he carried our sins but that
he was made to be sin for us. Our sins became his.

True God became true man & the truly righteous became sin
so he could die the death sins cause & take it away.

This continues to happen. Even as we continue to sin,

God continually forgives us, transferring our sin to Christ.

The result is that now we become the righteousness of God.

God gives us his righteousness to change who we are.

This is not anything we could do for ourselves.

Dead people can't make themselves alive.

Creatures don't create themselves.

But God's word causes creation to be and the dead to live,
and God's word makes sinners forgiven and righteous
and gives us faith and causes us to be born again.

And once God has made us a new creation,
we regard ourselves and God and others differently.
We can live as people we are. We can love God & others.
We can share the wonderful word he gave us.
the word of forgiveness that causes reconciliation.

WHO WE ARE CHANGES RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEOPLE
rather than just relating according to how they appear to us
we can do what we do because of who we are.

GOD'S RELATIONSHIP WITH US CHANGES WHO WE ARE
God's love for us as his children is what makes us loving
and makes us ambassadors of his love to others.

CHRIST CHANGES OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.
God is the one who changes us by making Christ our sin.
so that we are changed into the righteousness of God
and so caused to live out that righteousness
in our lives here and in heaven forever.