

July 6- Written Service

Praise Team- Melanie Jacobsen, Lindsay Hunter, Merlin Thompson, Luke Van Wyk

Special Music- Luke Van Wyk- viola

Prelude

Welcome

Call to Worship

Leader: Come, Lord God to receive our worship. Come, Lord Jesus, to receive our praise. Come, Holy Spirit, to receive our thanks. Come, eternal God, to where we are gathered to celebrate reconciliation: yours with us, and ours with each other.

All: Your lifegiving Word and Spirit have conquered the powers of sin and death, which try to separate us from you. They have also conquered the powers of hostility and bitterness, which try to separate your people from each other.

Leader: You have called us to be the salt of the earth.

All: You have called us to be the light of the world.

Leader: You have called us to be peacemakers and to bless others.

All: Help us to bring loving acceptance and reconciliation to our neighbors everywhere.

Song: How Great is Our God

The splendor of the King clothed in majesty,
Let all the earth rejoice, let all the earth rejoice.
He wraps Himself in light and darkness tried to hide,
It trembles at His voice, it trembles at His voice.

How great is our God! Sing with me,
How great is our God! And all will see
How great, how great is our God!

Age to age, He stands and time is in His hands,
Beginning and the End, Beginning and the End.
The Godhead, three in one,
Father, Spirit, son, The Lion and the Lamb,
The Lion and the Lamb.

How great is our God! Sing with me,
How great is our God! And all will see
How great, how great is our God!

Prayer

Song: Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)

Amazing grace how sweet the sound

That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost, but now I'm found,
Was blind but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved.
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.

CHORUS

My chains are gone, I've been set free.
My God, my Savior has ransomed me.
And like a flood His mercy reigns,
Unending love, amazing grace.

The Lord has promised good to me,
His Word my hope secures.
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures.

CHORUS

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
The sun forbear to shine.
But God Who called me here below will be forever mine.
You are forever mine.

Announcements

Special Music- Be Thou My Vision/'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus- Luke Van Wyk, viola

Congregational Prayer

Song: #667- Lord, Speak to Me (vs. 1,3,4)

Lord, speak to me, that I may speak
In living echoes of Thy tone;
As Thou hast sought, so let me seek
Thine erring children lost and lone.

O fill me with Thy fullness, Lord,
Until my very heart o'erflow
In kindling thought and glowing word,
Thy love to tell, Thy praise to show.

O use me, Lord, use even me,

Just as Thou wilt, and when, and where,
Until Thy blessed face I see—
Thy rest, Thy joy, Thy glory share.

Offering/Offertory

Offering Song- Sanctuary

Offering Prayer

Children's Message

Scripture: 2nd Corinthians 5: 16-21

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. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 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. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Message

Unity

Unity is good (review from previous week)

Gift and obligation

But what do you do when there is no unity?

When everything is already broken and fractured?

How would they begin in South Africa?

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was a court-like restorative justice body assembled in South Africa in 1996 after the end of apartheid. Authorized by Nelson Mandela and chaired by Desmond Tutu, the commission invited witnesses who were identified as victims of gross human rights violations to give statements about their experiences, and selected some for public hearings. Perpetrators of violence could also give testimony and request amnesty from both civil and criminal prosecution.

The commission was empowered to grant amnesty to those who committed abuses during the apartheid era, as long as the crimes were politically motivated, proportionate, and there was full disclosure by the person seeking amnesty. To avoid victor's justice, no side was exempt from appearing before the commission. The commission heard reports of human rights violations and considered amnesty applications from all sides, from the apartheid state to the liberation forces, including the African National Congress.

Within the church, the process involved writing the Belhar Confession

Article 3 focuses on reconciliation

Which is our emphasis this week

Reconciliation is both how we maintain unity and how we create unity from places of separation

Scripture-2 Corinthians

Belhar 3

3. We believe

- that God has entrusted the church with the message of reconciliation in and through Jesus Christ, that the church is called to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, that the church is called blessed because it is a peacemaker, that the church is witness both by word and by deed to the new heaven and the new earth in which righteousness dwells (2 Cor. 5:17-21; Matt. 5:13-16; Matt. 5:9; 2 Peter 3:13; Rev. 21-22).
- that God's lifegiving Word and Spirit has conquered the powers of sin and death, and therefore also of irreconciliation and hatred, bitterness and enmity, that God's lifegiving Word and Spirit will enable the church to live in a new obedience which can open new possibilities of life for society and the world (Eph. 4:17-6:23, Rom. 6; Col. 1:9-14; Col. 2:13-19; Col. 3:1-4:6);
- that the credibility of this message is seriously affected and its beneficial work obstructed when it is proclaimed in a land which professes to be Christian, but in which the enforced separation of people on a racial basis promotes and perpetuates alienation, hatred and enmity;
- that any teaching which attempts to legitimate such forced separation by appeal to the gospel, and is not prepared to venture on the road of obedience and reconciliation, but rather, out of prejudice, fear, selfishness and unbelief, denies in advance the reconciling power of the gospel, must be considered ideology and false doctrine.

Therefore, we reject any doctrine

- which, in such a situation, sanctions in the name of the gospel or of the will of God the forced separation of people on the grounds of race and color and thereby in advance obstructs and weakens the ministry and experience of reconciliation in Christ.

God reconciling us to Himself

From our passage, reconciliation begins with how we used to see Jesus

Once we regarded Christ this way

Jesus was not much to look at

Isaiah 53

He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him,
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

³ He was despised and rejected by mankind,
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.

Like one from whom people hide their faces
he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

He wasn't rich or powerful

He said and did weird things

He associated with people that most would avoid

By any measure, Jesus is someone we would maybe avoid at first glance

But then something changes

We see more there

We start to see who He really is

And because of Jesus' life, teaching, sacrificial death, and resurrection we are reconciled to God

Us reconciling with one another

But it doesn't stop there, it snowballs into our relationships with one another

"So now we regard no one from a worldly point of view"

Even when others aren't much to look at

Even when they aren't rich or powerful

Even when people say or do weird things

Even when they annoy us or hurt us or we struggle to understand them

Those aren't the things that are the most important

Through God's work in us, we regard/see others more the way God sees them

Than the way the rest of the world views them, or how we would have viewed them apart from God

People are no longer problems, they become gifts (glimpses into God)

Made in God's own image

Christ reflected in the least of these brothers and sisters

God has reconciled us to Himself, through Jesus

He has allowed us to see Jesus in a new light

To help us see beyond all of the things that would keep us distant and at arm's length

To draw us closer to Him

And now we are to be reconciled to one another

Seeing one another in a new light

Seeing beyond all of the things that would separate us and keep us apart from each other

Not enough just to see others differently

That's where it begins

That's what allows everything else to happen

God bring us back to Himself

Heart of the gospel message

Because of God, through God, we are able to bring together what has been separated in our lives

To actively pursue reconciliation with others

To support reconciliation in the world around

To be ambassadors for God's reconciling work

We speak and act on behalf of reconciliation

This builds on message on unity from last week

Not enough just that we hold things together (preserve unity)

As ambassadors of reconciliation, we go further, seeking to put back together those things that are broken

Within us

All around us

Practically-what reconciliation looks like

What does this look like in practical terms

Willingness to share the same space but never talk to one another?

That's not the picture of reconciliation that we see between God and humanity

Or something more?

Christian faith had been used to justify and lend legitimacy to the forced racial separation of apartheid

The same has been true of slavery here in America and around the world

Part of why we must be reformed and always reforming according to the word of God

Because we are sinful people given to sinful behaviors

And God is always working to reform and reshape us according to His will

Because of this, we work to advance the cause of reconciliation

To put back those things we (humanity) have torn apart

Because we are ambassadors for Christ who reconciles and makes whole

I hear these different situations or think about all the separation we see around us

And I feel like they are different from what the Bible talks about or they are too much to reconcile,

Consider:

- God reconciling with us (not even because we'd repented yet)
- The reconciliation that happened in South Africa

God's reconciliation with us wasn't cheap, pretend, or easy

In order to do that work, He had to sacrifice Himself

Are we willing to let go of things that might be precious to us for the sake of reconciliation?

Our hurt

Our right to get even

Our pride

Our sin

Because Unity is a command from God

And Reconciliation is the work/obligation of building and growing that unity in a world too often known for disunity and separation

Song: #428- In Christ There is No East or West

In Christ there is no East or West, in Him no South or North;
But one great fellowship of love throughout the whole wide earth.

In Him shall true hearts everywhere their high communion find;
His service is the golden cord close binding all mankind.

Join hands then, brothers of the faith, what-e'er your race may be;
Who serves my Father as a son is surely kin to me.

In Christ now meet both East and West: in Him meet South and North.
All Christly souls are one in Him throughout the whole wide earth.

Benediction

Postlude