

So Do You Believe It?

2Corinthians 5:14-21

Good Friday, April 19, 2018

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

God reconciled the world to Himself in Christ Jesus.

God reconciled the world to Himself in Christ because in Christ Jesus He does not count men's sins against them. It is not that men are not sinners. It is just that in Christ Jesus God does not count men's sins against them. It is not that God does not count men's sins against them for just a few. God reconciled the world to Himself in Christ Jesus.

Since you are a part of this world God has reconciled you to Himself in Christ Jesus. In Christ Jesus God does not count your sins against you. He does this by making Jesus who knew no sin to be your sin so that you in exchange would become the righteousness of God. In other words Jesus takes your sin away and in exchange He gives you His righteousness. He entrusted to the apostles the message of this reconciliation. The apostolic message that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself has been delivered to you. I have delivered it to you and others who have been called to deliver it to you have delivered it to you. That is why you believe it. If it had not been delivered it would not have been believed by anyone not even by you, but since it has been delivered by the apostles to you, you have believed it.

Thus simple faith in Jesus Christ saves.

If a person does not believe that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ Jesus, then he rejects the reconciliation that God has achieved in Christ Jesus. If someone does not believe that they are a new creation because of the reconciliation to God that Christ Jesus has achieved, then they are not a new creation. God has made them a new creation, but they have rejected it. If a person does not believe that they have been reconciled to God in Christ Jesus, then they reject the righteousness that they became when Jesus became their sin. If a person does not believe in this grace of God they are left with their own good deeds to appease God and earn their salvation. There is no other option. Even those people who deny the existence of God are eager to prove to others how righteous they are in whatever system of righteousness they advocate thereby proving that every human being even an atheist believes and trusts in his own merit, works, righteousness, and worth even when he is not trusting in it to justify him before God.

Simple faith in Jesus therefore saves. A simple trust in His creating power which has made you a new creation saves. Simple trust in the reconciliation that He has achieved when He took your sin and gave you His righteousness in its place. That is all. Just faith and your sins are not reckoned to you. God does not count them against you. You are reconciled to Him. You are no longer His enemy. You have become His friend.

But simple faith in Jesus is simple faith in the Jesus who took on your sin. Simple faith in Jesus is simple faith in the One who knew no sin and yet God made Him sin on your behalf.

Simple faith in Jesus is simple faith in the One who by bearing your sin made you righteous in the eyes of God. Simple faith in Jesus is simple faith in the Jesus who accomplished this bearing of your sin by His crucifixion. It is only by death that He could have borne your sin. It is only by death that He could have given you His righteousness. Therefore simple faith in Jesus is simple faith in the crucified Jesus, the One who laid down His life in order to forgive you.

Now if it cost Jesus that much to forgive you and reconcile you to the Father, who do you think you are when you refuse to forgive another who confesses their sin to you? If you are forgiven, how dare you not forgive someone else? How dare you hold a grudge against someone else for the wrongs that they have done to you? Look at the wrongs that you have done against the Lord. Look at your faithlessness and sin and tell me if you deserve to have the eternal Son of the Father take on human flesh and die for you. And if you do not deserve the forgiveness that He has given you which reconciles you to the Father, how dare you turn around say that someone else has to deserve your forgiveness before you give it to them! Who do you think you are? Do you think that you are righteous and therefore are in a position to demand payment from the one who has wronged you? If you do, then you don't believe in Jesus. You don't have this simple faith in Jesus because if you did, you would know that your salvation is by His grace and not by works. You didn't deserve the forgiveness that God has given you at the expense of His only Son so why do you demand that other people deserve your forgiveness? You hypocrite! You unbeliever!

If you are a new creation in Christ Jesus, if you have become the righteousness of God by virtue of the fact that you are a new creation in Christ Jesus, then why don't you confess your sins? Why don't you admit to the people that you have wronged the wrongs that you have committed against them? Why do you refuse to confess? Why do you refuse to admit what you have done? Why do you keep a secret? Or if it is not a secret, why do you refuse to talk about it for years? Are you hoping that it will go away? Are you hoping that the people against whom you have sinned will forget about it? Are you hoping that God who saw your sin against your brothers and your neighbors will forget what you have done? The Lord promises not to remember, but He only does that in Christ Jesus. The Lord is not forgetful as men are. The thoughts and impulses of the heart are laid bare before Him. Nothing is hidden from His eyes.

If you refuse to confess a sin to a brother in Christ, when you are aware that brother in Christ knows about it, then you are still trusting in your own righteousness. You are still trying to look good in the eyes of everyone including God and including yourself and that is why you will not confess it. If you believed that you had become the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus, then you would rely on His righteousness and you would not be afraid to confess your sins. The reason that you refuse to confess is because you do not have faith. You do not have the simple faith in Jesus that believes that you have become the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus, that you have become a new creation in Christ Jesus, that in Christ Jesus God reconciled the world to Himself not counting men's transgressions against them. You may believe that He reconciled other people, but not the world because that reconciliation did not include you because you are still doing it by your works.

If that is the case, don't even bother to say the Apostles' Creed because that would be hypocrisy. If that is the case don't even bother to pray the Lord's Prayer for when you get to the petition about God forgiving you as you forgive others, it will only damn you.

With God you either do things in the way of the Law or in the way of the Gospel. The way of the Law allows you to keep track of everyone else's sins and your own and the way of the Law leads to hell. The way of the Gospel forgives you of your sins and everyone else. It allows you to confess and it enables it not to even occur to you to keep a grudge against someone else. The way of the Gospel leads to everlasting life.

That is the simple faith which some of you say that you cherish so highly. Do you have it?

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.