

All Saints Anglican Church of Southern Arizona, Inc.

Sexagesima Sunday Sermon on 2018-02-04

Be Reconciled to God!

by Fr Reed Merino

From today's gospel: Luke 8:15 "But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.

Listen carefully to the precise words Jesus chose to use. His words are VERY carefully selected and deserve the same careful examination as you learned to give in Algebra (e.g., the difference between a "x" and a "+')

- "hear the word" (presumes what JESUS meant by 'the word': EVERYthing that came from His mouth, not just some evangelical "four spiritual laws" truncation)
- "with good heart" (more than believing the real facts is necessary – the DEVIL does that). A specific attitude is required: a trusting and childlike heart. Understanding without that attitude is worthless.
- "keep/obey it (i.e., James 2:18 'Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith BY my works.'")
- All this is what causes a hearer to come to "bear fruit" (fruit of salvation).

Paul said the following to those whom HE had led to God, NOT to contemporary "Christians":

Colossians 1:12 "...the Father ... 13 ... has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins."

[Does God think that this is true of YOU? WHY? My testimony: searching to see if the promises of the N.T. actually applied to ME (which, surprisingly, they did not - yet]

Paul said the following about Jesus:

Colossians 1:15 "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ... 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. [He

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is] ... the firstborn from the dead, that in all things HE may have the preeminence. "

[Believing that this is true is an important first step TOWARD true conversion. But by itself, it is merely an example of what James had been warning about: the need for works to flow from that belief. In this case, "works" means that you have decided to place Jesus in that exalted authority over all your decisions, that HE may have the preeminence in YOUR life: you have let Him break your hardened and complacent heart, and become like the Japanese at the end of WWII: unconditional surrender, with no qualifications.

Have you made this decision? If so, then you will WANT to carefully examine all the commands and promises that come from Him in His Word. If you have not yet let him break your hardened and complacent heart, you are not yet "saved from God's wrath;" you are not yet "born again;" you are still on that "broad way" that leads to destruction; and the spirit you are still listening to is the "god of this world," and your destiny is still Satan's destiny.

"19 For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, 20 and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. 21 And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled 22 in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight — "

[again, Paul was saying this about THEM, not about you, just because you have been faithful Protestant or Catholic participants in some religious system. You know whether you really believe it: IF YOU ARE COMMITTED TO ACT CONSISTENTLY WITH IT. Remember what Jesus Himself said:

"19 "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 "Therefore by their FRUITS you will know them" (Matthew 19).

HAVE you come to the personal awareness that you are not joined to God? That your inherent godlessness causes you to need to be "reconciled" to Him? That you have a "good heart" toward God and to the DETAILS of His Son's teaching?

Romans 5:8 "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, having now

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been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. 10 For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

I have been loading you with exhortations, and with warnings about what will happen to you if you ignore His exhortations. That negative message is very important, because the "good news" of the "gospel" is only GOOD news to a person who realizes his/her TRUE condition and TRUE destiny. Going through the inconvenience and pain of a heart transplant is only good news to the person who is finally convinced that they are about to die from a failing heart, but are then given hope by being assured that a new heart is available, and is going to be inserted by the most eminent heart surgeon on the planet. THEN the painful surgery is "good news."

God does NOT want to condemn you or me to the fate waiting for the great majority of mankind: "For God did not send His Son into the world to CONDEMN the world, but that the world through Him might be SAVED" (John 3:17).

Paul expresses what God truly DOES want for you:

Ephesians 3:19 "... to know the love [that is in] Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

2 Corinthians 5:17 "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 18 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 that is, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. 20 Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. 21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

What your Creator truly WANTS for you is to make of you a "new" human being, filled with GOD: having new hungers, new attitudes, new hopes, new relationships, new gentleness, new courage, new destiny. What He truly WANTS is for you to know "Christ in you, [bringing] the hope of GLORY" (Colossians 1:27). What He truly WANTS for you is that you know what human beings do not naturally know: "righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17). The Christianity of JESUS is not just

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something that brings rewards AFTER you die. It is not only a “there and then” religion, but necessarily a “here and now” one. Actually if there is no “here and now” there will not be a “there and then” future for you!

His real message in His commands is not, “Do this or ELSE...”. It is, “Trust me enough to do what I say, so that I may restore you to Me and cause you to receive blessing and honor and glory that will never, EVER cease.”

So please, PLEASE: commit yourself to His only Son; commit yourself to the WAY His Son taught and modeled; confess Him before men (starting here in this congregation); receive His disciple’s baptism; receive His Spirit and glory in your own Pentecost; and watch yourself bear that wonderful fruit He will give you!

AMEN?