

Romans 5:6-15

“Peace and Reconciliation through Christ Alone!”

Second Sunday after Pentecost

June 14, 2020

First Lutheran Church, Glencoe, Minn.

Pastor Peter Adelsen

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen!

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

[Intro]

“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly” (Romans 5:6).

These past weeks, we have all seen and heard the turmoil happening throughout our country that all began in our own backyard of Minneapolis.

We have all felt sadness and anger at the death of George Floyd. We have all heard the calls for justice. Many of us here today have called for justice to be served. But, unlike the justice system in television and movies, the real justice system moves slow in order to protect our rights as citizens.

At the same time, some people want justice served now. They see the video footage and they believe that is enough for a conviction in the court of public opinion. Then, we have the agitators who are taking advantage of the situation by rioting, looting and setting fires.

Where do we go from here? Is there any hope for humanity?

On Tuesday, June 2, I witnessed the Glencoe protest along with Pastor Welch and Tori, alongside with us was Pastor Jon Niebuhr and Ted Stroming of Good Shepherd.

I heard much anger as many told of their past encounters with police. I also could tell that they were searching for something. There was a void that was not being filled. In the words of Christ, they were **“like sheep without a shepherd”** (Matthew 9:36).

I saw them kneel and lay on the ground. I heard them chant George Floyd's name. I had compassion for them. But, there was something missing. I can tell they were searching. And, there I was in full sight of the protesters holding my Bible.

The Apostle Paul tells us: ***“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly”*** (Romans 5:6).

[We are All Afflicted with Sin]

We are all afflicted with the same illness. For the past months, we have focused upon the COVID-19 Pandemic. We have kept ourselves socially distant from one another. We have been wearing masks out of respect and care for our neighbor. But, there is another illness that is much worse than COVID-19. I'm not talking about cancer or heart disease. This illness is sin.

Within the past decades, the culture has tried its hardest to eliminate the idea of sin from our collective conscience. We are told that love is love and that we must tolerate and accept each other. We are told that broken families are normal families. We are told that a celebrity's word is more important than God's Word.

But, here we are again. As the culture has attempted to sweep sin under the rug, we see a mountain of sin emerging under that rug.

Our sinful nature has taken over our television sets, our computers, and our tablets. At one click, we see riots here and there. Some of us may actually enjoy seeing destruction. After all, that is why the news media continuously airs bad news. This is what is taught in journalism schools. I know since I went to a journalism school and I was a journalist. Bad news sells papers. Bad news brings ratings. Bad news gets clicks.

Apart from Christ, our sinful nature just takes over. This is what Paul is saying. Paul is depicting humanity in starkly negative terms:

- He describes us as “weak” and “ungodly.”
- He describes us as “sinners” and “enemies.”

We are hostile toward God, since in our sinful nature, we believe we are gods. We believe we know more than what the one true God has revealed to us.

Our whole culture and us here need to repent of our sins against God the Father and repent of our sins against our neighbor.

Yes, just minutes ago, we confessed our sins to God the Father and we received His forgiveness, but did you confess all of your sins to God the Father?

- Do you actually fear God's wrath and avoid every sin?
- Have you been angry, stubborn, or disrespectful toward those in authority over you?
- Do you have hate in your heart?
- Do you have a grudge against someone?
- Have you been respecting your neighbor's property and possessions?

And, if you have been able to watch the endless hours of riots, protests, upheld fists, and the confrontation on both sides — without an inch of hatred in your heart, you are only lying to yourself, because that sin exists in all of our hearts.

From catechism class, we should all remember the Fourth Commandment: Honor your father and your mother, which means we are to honor all authorities. This speaks of the authority of family and the authority of the State. But, what happens when this commandment is abused?

Remember, just because the government has the authority to wage war, this doesn't mean that the government is doing the right thing. So, just because you have authority, this doesn't mean that you are free from sin.

You see, the sin of authority can and does do lasting damage. So, if we are abused by a stranger, that is one thing. But, if we are abused by someone in authority, that is an entirely different thing. This could be the same physical damage, but when it comes from a person in authority, this does have a deep and profound wounding experience. This does deep damage.

So, oftentimes, in response to abused authority, we often want to take vengeance against that authority. Now, are Christians to take vengeance?

No! As God says: "***Vengeance is mine***" (Deuteronomy 32:35; Romans 12:19; Hebrews 10:30). So, if we do not leave room for God's wrath, we are stepping into His authority and into His office. We are placing ourselves in the place of the one true God.

Instead, we are to love our neighbor and to pray for all. The culture says that prayer is a retreat, but in reality prayer is taking the offensive.

God always responds to our prayers! In fact, God tells us ***“I hear the cries”*** of my people (Exodus 3:7). These cries are prayer. God delivered the Hebrews from Pharaoh, and He continues to deliver us each time we cry to Him in prayer.

You see, if we take vengeance, instead of prayer to God, Satan works with anger in the conscience. He hardens our conscience against a person or if the sin comes from a person in authority, Satan hardens our conscience against that institution. This feels like righteousness and a good work. But, this is dangerous and Satan knows that. This sin is disguised as righteous indignation. We think that this sin is excused. But, this sin is truly a sin. And, all sin separates us from God.

We all deserve the wrath of God. But God the Father freely gives everyone who trusts in Jesus as Lord His grace!

God gives us a free solution to every sin against Him — hatred, murder, lust, racism. God the Father’s solution for every sin is Jesus Christ alone!

In His incarnation, Jesus took upon Himself our one human nature. He didn’t pick a certain race, but the human race. By His death on the cross, He redeemed all of mankind. He did not just redeem various colors of mankind, but ***all*** of mankind. He paid the price for all of our sins and He is the only thing that unites the human race.

We cannot unite around slogans, politics, or anything else. Everything else in an effort to unite us, will also divide us — and set us against each other.

The only One who can truly unite us is Jesus Christ, united in His flesh, in His death, in His resurrection, in His ascension, and in the sacrifice He made for us ***all*** upon the cross.

[God Reconciles Us to Him]

Look what God does: ***“For while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation”*** (Romans 5:10-11).

This metaphor of reconciliation comes from the world of relationships. The earthly context may be between nations, armies, spouses, enemies, or friends. Reconciliation often results in meeting in the middle and compromising by both parties.

With this in mind, we need to be reconciled to God.

But, this isn't the case with the Triune God. Instead, He came to us! He does all the reconciling, not us! We do nothing! We just receive His grace! For while we were still His enemies, God the Father reconciled us to Himself through His Son Jesus Christ!

You see, God the Father is personal, seeking, caring and forgiving. He reaches out and takes the initiative to restore a relationship that was broken through no fault of His own.

Before the incarnation of Christ, reconciliation in the Old Testament times occurred through a mediator like Moses, who foreshadowed the fulfillment of Christ.

Today, we – *who were enemies of God* – are reconciled to God ***“through the death of His Son”*** (Romans 5:10).

Since, we have been bought, redeemed and purchased by God the Father through the death and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ, we are now a child of the Heavenly Father!

We no longer have to fear the wrath of God, for by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone, we have the hope and assurance of eternal life. We hear and receive this hope and assurance through God's Word and in receiving Christ's true Body and Blood in the Lord's Supper for the forgiveness of our sins that He won for us upon the cross.

[In Christ Alone We Have Peace and Reconciliation]

So, as I asked earlier: Where do we go from here? Is there any hope for humanity?

Yes, we go to Jesus for He is the only hope for humanity! The only thing that unites humanity is Jesus Christ alone!

In response, we pray to God for our neighbor. We pray thanksgivings to God for our forgiveness. We look to God's Word for examples on how we can have peace and reconciliation with one another.

As Christians, we live in God's grace. Now, we don't sin all the more because we have been given grace. Instead, we live peaceably with all, as we thank and praise God for all of His benefits that He bestows upon us. Yes, we continually do fall into the trap of sin, but we repent of our sin and know that we have been reconciled through the blood of Christ. We are to flee to Christ for the forgiveness of all of our sins.

“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned ... For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many” (Romans 5:12, 15).

We have all received the grace of God and the undeserved gift in grace through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

As sin and death originated with Adam, forgiveness and life abound for all His children through the one man Jesus Christ in what He has done for us. In Christ alone, we have peace and reconciliation! Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

✠ SOLI DEO GLORIA ✠