# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

 **“Reconciliation”**

**2 Corinthians 5:18-20**

**May 10, 2020**

The Bible paints for us a picture of the creator God of the universe, powerful and awesome in majesty, coming to us through his Son and inviting us to turn to him and enter into an eternal relationship. Why does God do this? Because you and I are so wonderfully amazing and deserving that he just can’t help himself? I don’t think so. God does this because his desire, his strong, loving desire, is to be in relationship with us.

Jesus made this truth about God clear to us, the truth that God desires everyone to be reconciled to him. It was Jesus who told us the story of the father who looked down the road every day in anxious longing for his wayward son to come home. It was Jesus who spoke of the shepherd who leaves his ninety-nine sheep to look for the one last lamb, not because he is indifferent to the ninety-nine but because of his love for the one. It was Jesus who was the friend of the lonely, the outcast, the marginalized, because, like his Father, he desired that each and every one of them be brought into a relationship with God.

There is a common caricature in our culture of the stern God of the Old Testament who strongly dislikes people and can’t wait to judge them, but the loving Jesus of the New Testament intervenes and saves them from this vengeful God. This version of reality could not be more wrong. Let me read for you a couple of verses from 2 Corinthians 5:18-20

All of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people’s sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. So we are Christ’s ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, “Come back to God!”

From the beginning God has loved his creation and has sought a way to be reconciled to it. God’s intention in bringing us into being was to have a relationship of love and trust. But sin entered the world and led to the breaking of that relationship and to the loss of love and joy and peace and all the other benefits of living closely with God. What, then, was God’s response to our sin and the loss of relationship with him? Did he condemn us, deciding we had blown our chance for eternal happiness? No, he didn’t. While the relationship was lost, God’s intention was not. In his Son, Jesus Christ, he reached out to us and offered us another chance, a new opportunity to have what we had forfeited because of our disobedience. All we need to do is accept this free gift from God.

This is what God has done for us; now, we are to do it for one another. Earlier in this chapter from 2 Corinthians Paul points out that one of the things that changes about a person who becomes a Christian is how he or she sees other people. We look at people differently from what we once did, viewing them with a new optimism and hope. Even those with whom we struggle we now see with eyes of love rather than judgment. All because we realize that is how God sees us.

Today is Mother’s Day, a special day to give thanks to God for the woman who gave us birth, who gave freely of her time and energy to care for us, who saw the best in us during those times when we thought little of ourselves. Perhaps it wasn’t obvious to others who simply saw us as we were outwardly, but she had a vision for us, a hope and an imagination of a caring young man, of a loving young woman. She prayed for us, encouraged and corrected us, disciplined and taught us, because she looked at us with the eyes of love. And, lo and behold, so much of what she desired for us came to pass, precisely because she didn’t give up on us, precisely because she didn’t condemn us when we failed. We thank the Lord for our mothers, for their love, for their hard work, and for not rejecting us when we were at our worst.

With whom are you struggling today in your life? A friend, a child or a parent, a spouse? Do you see only the hurt that their behavior has caused? Do you zero in on the mistakes they have made, making sure they know you haven’t forgotten? Are you counting their sins against them? Or, do you see them as our heavenly Father sees us, as our mother saw us, as persons who are worthy of love and forgiveness and reconciliation.

God was offended against when we sinned, and yet he took the initiative to bring us back through his Son. Our mother bore the burdens of our misbehavior, and yet she persevered in her love for us. Yes, you and I may have been mistreated by someone else, but as children of both our heavenly Father and our earthly mother, let us be willing to take the first step toward reconciliation. Let us set aside any desire to hurt because we have been hurt, to repay evil with evil, and instead do all we can to restore what has been broken between ourselves and others.