

FIRST REFORMED CHURCH OF MITCHELL, SD
LENTEN DEVOTIONS 2018

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14 DAY 1 READ: 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:10

Be Reconciled

-Mike Asmus

This passage provides a beautiful summary of the gospel in five verses. We are urged to be reconciled to Christ. Christ has done all He can to bring us into His arms. He who had no sin was made sin for us, that we may be presented righteous and clean to God. The next step is ours; we must make the decision to follow and accept. God's grace is there for the taking - no strings, no questioning.

Then in the second half of this passage, Paul goes through every hardship or trouble we could ever face. It doesn't matter; we are accepted by Christ anyway, through beatings, imprisonment, dishonor, sleepless nights. Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing. Nothing can block that grace that Christ is offering. Accept it; surrender to Him!

You have been made clean through Jesus taking on our sin and removing it from the equation. No stumbling blocks, only grace. Even if we have nothing in the world's eyes, nevertheless, we have everything in him who is Lord of all. He wants you!

Prayer: May we be reconciled to Christ through His grace given freely and openly. We who were dirty are now cleansed by Jesus, so that we may be presented blameless and pure before God. Thank you, Lord Jesus.

Champion of Love

-Bob Polly

Do you ever feel like the world wants us to feel bad for being Christian? It acts as if we are the enemy – says we don't care, we have too many rules, we are a country club where everyone is not welcome, and even that we think we don't sin. WRONG!! We are all sinners and fall short of the glory of God. Like it or not, believe it or not, one day we ALL will be held accountable.

Sometimes I feel we don't show the world how wonderful it is being a Christian. Muslims, Buddhists, Jehovah Witnesses, and other faiths freely share and push their respective religions. We are commissioned by God as Christians to share His message and live our lives out as Jesus showed us. "All the ways of the Lord are loving and faithful toward those who keep the demands of his covenant" (verse 10). We have a blueprint to salvation - it is the written word of God and the blood of Christ, our risen Savior.

The Psalmist says we can't be shamed if we believe, trust, and have hope in the Lord. We don't have to feel bad for our belief in the Word. Jesus boldly died for our sins and rose again and lives in heaven with our Father. He is waiting for us. He is our Hope - our Champion of Love!

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the hope You give us, Your faithfulness, mercy and love. Give us the strength to be bold and share Your Word. Amen.

Faithful or Rebellious?

-Carly Hubers

Daniel's prayer is a difficult passage to sit with. This is a prayer of confession—and nothing that comes with it is easy to swallow. As I read, I find myself wanting to skip past these verses, to find a happy resolution to this relationship of God and people, instead of sitting with the reality of brokenness and wrath.

From Daniel's confession, we know the people of Israel have not been as faithful as they have been rebellious. The people of Israel are so like us—hiding in our shame, turning from the Lord, ignoring God's command upon our lives. We turn away from a promise of relationship with God, chasing after our own desire for power, our own understanding of love, or our own pursuit of happiness.

According to our understanding of justice, God has every right to punish the people. We have forfeited our right to mercy in our rebellion (verse 9). There is no easy conclusion to this passage or to this season of Lent. At the end of this season, we see death, but we also know of resurrection. In confession, we commit to death to the self, turning to the Lord in prayer. Although it is not an easy endeavor, we are reminded that, as followers of Christ, we have access to something more. The season of Lent reminds us to slow down, to confess, to re-center, and to remember what it is—the compassion and mercy of God.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we are a rebellious people, pursuing our own sinful desires instead of Your holiness. Turn our hearts away from destructive things, and bring us back to You. Amen.

Friend of Sinners

-Matt Howlett

We often hear messages or read devotions about the first section of today's scripture. Certainly, Jesus forgiving and healing a paralytic is important and significant.

As we prepare our hearts and our minds this Lenten season, I want to challenge all of us to look closer at the second section of this passage. Jesus called a sinful tax collector named Matthew to follow Him. This led to Jesus attracting other sinners to be drawn to Him. Throughout Jesus' ministry, He intentionally went out of the way to draw the undesirables of society to be closer to Him. Jesus spent time ministering to tax collectors, Samaritans, and prostitutes.

I think if Jesus were actively walking the earth in ministry today, He would be reaching out to the gangsters, drug addicts and prostitutes in our society. Will you accept the challenge of Jesus' example throughout this season of Lent while we reflect on His loving sacrifice for our salvation? Are we willing, and can we step outside our comfort zone, to witness and minister to the undesirables and the downtrodden within our society?

This Lenten season, let's not just be the church that ministers to those that walk through our doors, but also to those that are lost in society.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, open the hearts and minds of Your people to stretch ourselves and reach out to the lost and forgotten within our society. Amen.