

## THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT April 1 & 2, 2006

### St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church – Watertown, WI

#### ONE WAY LOVE Romans 5:6-11

It's just like talking to the wall. There are times when you attempt to talk to someone and you seem to be getting nowhere. You feel that you would get as much response and interaction from a wall. There are times when the person you are attempting to talk to is hostile and can't stand you personally and so they show it by their silence and refusal to respond in any way to you. There are also times when the person doesn't appear to be listening or can't seem to understand what you are trying to communicate. When that happens the temptation is very great to give up and say, "There's nothing I can do here. I'll move on and work with someone else. This person is a hopeless case." It takes a lot of patience and love to continue to attempt to work with someone who shows no interest and may even be antagonistic towards us.

Most of us usually look for something in return when we show concern, care and kindness toward another person. When you do a person a favor, you often expect a "thank you". But when someone just ignores your kindness and seems to be adverse to your help and presence, it is very difficult to continue to show love and concern for that person.

In our devotion for the fifth Sunday in Lent the Apostle Paul reminds us that we have a God whose love towards us is totally different. God's love is unconditional and sacrificial. He points to this truth that the love God has for us is a **ONE WAY LOVE**. Most human beings look for and long for peace. **I) We Want Peace**. As you read Paul's description of our God and what he has done we are struck with this fact, **II) God Has Given Us Peace**

#### PEOPLE WANT PEACE

People usually desire peace. When you have an argument or fight with someone, you don't want that to continue on and to simmer for weeks, months or years. We like to have our disagreements solved and relationships restored with people. When parents and children are at odds with one another, you know the stress and turmoil that causes in a family. When husband and wife are at each other, holding grudges, refusing to forgive past sins and continually reminding each other of mistakes they have made in the past, you know how wonderful that is. We often will avoid conflict and even confrontation, because we don't want upset and fights in our lives. We would prefer that we could sail through life without any battles or disagreements.

We are seeing that in our nation right now as people are arguing about the Iraq War. This coming Tuesday citizens will be able to vote in a number of cities in our state on whether they think we should withdraw our troops from Iraq and end US presence in that country. Some of the reason behind this is the desire for peace. We don't like long and protracted fights and battles. Many in our nation don't want to see the youth of our nation put in harms way for years on end. Plus we are a people who often want quick fixes to problems and don't have the patience for years and years of war and bloodshed. We want peace.

As we desire peace between one another and between the nations of this world, we also desire peace and a right relationship with our God. However, the manner in which we often attempt to attain that peace is one that doesn't work. In fact, the truth is, there is nothing that you and I can do to restore our broken relationship with our Creator. The sad reality is that many people don't even see how broken their relationship with God really is. Our God is holy and perfect. He does not tolerate any flaws. He demands perfection from us, his creatures. He says, "Be holy because I the Lord your God, am holy." (Leviticus 19:2) God does not tolerate any small imperfection. David writes, "You hate all who do wrong." (Psalm 5:5b) When we recognize that every one of us does wrong and that God hates us; that is not such a pleasant thought. Not only does God hate wrongdoers but he says that they must all be punished. The prophet Nahum writes, "The LORD will not leave the guilty unpunished." (Nahum 1:3b) Since we all desire peace, what can we do to make peace between us and our Creator? The truth is nothing. There is absolutely nothing that we can do to bring peace between us and our God. That can be very frustrating and upsetting. No matter what we do, no matter how hard we try; we can't mend this broken relationship. It's a lot like the frustration many in our country experience when it comes to the Iraqi War and bringing our troops home. But the good news that Paul proclaims to us is that we have peace.

### **GOD HAS GIVEN US PEACE**

Paul begins this section of his letter by reminding us that this peace that we have was initiated by God according to his timetable and not ours. The Apostle writes, "You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly." (v. 6) God's plan to make peace was done when it was the right time according to his plans not ours. As we heard in our second lesson for today, "when that time had full come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive the full rights of sons." (Galatians 4:4-5) Two thousand years ago was just the right time in God's plans to carry out what he had promised in the Garden of Eden. Remember our first parents Adam and Eve seemed to think that when their first son, Cain, was born that he was the promised rescuer. For Eve said, "I have the man, the LORD." (Genesis 4:1b) This may have been Eve's wishing and thinking, but it was not according to God's schedule. Not only was this peace mission done according to God's plans but also while we were powerless. Paul makes it very clear that we had nothing to do with this peace process. We could not contribute in any way to making peace between us and our Creator. God did it all

How did he do it? "Christ died for the ungodly." Jesus Christ gave his life and satisfied the wrath and anger of God against sin and sinners. Paul then goes on to make some comparisons and comments on what we sinful humans might or might not do. He says, "Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good cause someone might possibly dare to die." (v. 7) Would you give up your life for some righteous person? Maybe but probably not. We aren't so willing to give our lives for another person. How about for a good cause? Possibly someone might be willing to give their life for a good cause, but even that is not guaranteed. But now our God is totally different. Listen to what Paul writes, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (v. 8) Would you sacrifice yourself or your only child for people who were indifferent, who didn't care, who actually hated you and rebelled against everything you said? Probably not. Yet that is what our God did for us. That is true love.

Paul now goes on to emphasize the impact of what Jesus did. "Since we have been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him." (v. 9) Because of the death of Jesus Christ we have been justified. That is, we have been pronounced "not guilty" by our God. God's wrath and anger have been satisfied. We are safe from God's punishment. Remember as a child

when you did something wrong, you often ran and hid or you lied so that you wouldn't be punished by your parents or teachers. We don't have to run and hide and we don't have to lie. We can admit our wrongs. We can still come before our God and we will hear him say, "I forgive and accept you because of my Son, Jesus Christ." This peace process is an ongoing work of our Savior to this day. Paul continues, "For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!" (v.10) We were enemies of God still at conflict with God and yet God made peace. Have you ever heard of such a thing in world history? What country has ever made peace with another while that other country was still at war and fighting with it? That's what God did with us. We were still hostile and battling against God and yet he proceeded to make peace with us. And that peace process still continues as our risen and living Savior is still pleading our case everyday before the throne of our Creator and winning pardon and forgiveness continually for us. As the Bible says, "Because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them." (Hebrews 7:24-25)

Paul concludes on this very triumphant note: "Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we now have received reconciliation." (v. 11) We are able to rejoice and praise our God. Why? We rejoice and praise our God because we have received reconciliation. We have peace with our Creator. We don't go through life carrying the guilt and shame of our past sins. When the devil attempts to drive us to despair and remind us of our sins and past rebellions, we respond, "I have peace with God. God has forgiven me because of Jesus Christ." As we face the troubles and problems of life we do not see them as God punishing us for some particular sin. God punished Jesus so that I will never be punished eternally for my sins. I may experience consequences because I live in an imperfect world and at times for my sinfulness and particular sins in this life, but I will not be eternally condemned because Jesus was condemned for me. God has made peace and he has sealed that peace to each us in our baptism and every time we receive our Savior's body and blood in the Blessed Sacrament.

Isn't the love of God amazing? This is like no other love you and I have ever experienced. We don't experience such love from other people. But we have seen and experienced this love from our Creator and Savior. As you see a world in constant conflict and war and as you see people continually fighting amongst themselves, remember we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. This is a peace that goes beyond all understanding. This is a peace that we have had no part in making. It is a peace that God has made with us through the sacrifice of his Son, Jesus Christ.

Amen.