

2 Corinthians 5:19-21 - Good Friday, 25.3.2016

God's invitation!

¹⁹ For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. This is the wonderful message he has given us to tell others. ²⁰ We are Christ's ambassadors, and God is using us to speak to you. We urge you, as though Christ himself were here pleading with you, "Be reconciled to God!" ²¹ For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ. [NLT]

When you drive along the streets it becomes apparent that lamp posts are for more than the lights at the top - they are often used for attaching all kinds of advertisements for shows or to advise when the electricity will be out; they are used by newspapers to draw attention to the headline stories for the day.

As we look at the cross of Jesus, it is also in a sense a lamp post - for this cross sends light across the world caught up in darkness. But it also has the other purpose of lamp posts - it carries a poster. Not only the words at the top, put there by Pilate to indicate why Jesus was crucified (Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews), but also the unwritten words which speak of what happened there.

Good Friday was and is a day of shocking news. Shocking for the people who were close to Jesus - his disciples, his mother and the other women who had accompanied Jesus. It is a day of shocking news for us today also, because it bears witness to the depth of sin - because **God (had) made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin**. His own Son to be made to suffer and die in this cruel way - because of you and me.

But the cross also carries other news - Jesus hanging on the cross - brings across to us the unbelievable news of

God's invitation!

Everything we hear and experience today has this invitation written all over it: "**Be reconciled to God!**" Hearing and reading about the suffering of Jesus - as we do during Lent, and also at other times - is meaningless, if we do not also hear

this invitation to be reconciled with God.

All the happenings of Good Friday - everything that had led to this since the day of Jesus' birth - had the one purpose that **God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself**.

For a long time people had tried to be in the right with God again. They tried 'religion' - and they brought their sacrifices, things which really cost them money and effort and time. They tried to get close to God by the strict observance of certain laws. But all these things could not close the break in the relationship between us and God - at best it could give the impression of being very pious. The actual result is that these strict observances lead to a further break with people around us - especially who don't live by the rules and observances one has (which may be one of the reasons for 'religious terrorism' - to cleanse the world of those who don't live the way one does!)

There are many attempts in our time to establish a better and more just society. We are called on to be more tolerant of those who are different; to live in peace with those who had been our enemies. People are called on to share what they have with those who have less, to help those who are weaker.

But how do we overcome the causes of intolerance and hatred? How do we make peace, and care for each other, if we are not really at peace with ourselves. How do we put others - if not first, then at least on an equal footing to ourselves -, if all we care for is what we want? Just expecting people to be good and to change is not enough!

So God stepped in to do what we could not. He calls out to us by his messengers, "**Be reconciled to God!**" What you and I could not do, he has done for us: **God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ**. The NIV leaves it even more stark: God made him who had no sin to be sin for us.

It certainly is right and necessary for us to hear about the suffering and crucifixion of our Lord - to remember what Jesus went through. But it is not only about hearing what he went through.

What happened on the cross is not just about ancient history, but about your

and my story. God did what he did for us, when he made Christ to be the sin offering, **so that we could be made right with God through Christ.**

The message of the cross - what we may hear and are to accept is this: **God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. ... We urge you, as though Christ himself were here pleading with you, "Be reconciled to God!"**

That is why we now turn to God as we confess what the death of Christ means for us as we say the words of the **Explanation to the 2nd Article**

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord,
who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil;
not with gold or silver, but with his holy precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death,
that I may be his own and live under him in his kingdom and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness, just as he is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity.
This is most certainly true.