***Sermon Series: Experiencing God***

**Sermon #8: Be Reconciled!**

Matthew 5:21-26

Matthew 5:10-12

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| **Slide** | **Sermon** |
| 1 | Title Slide |
| 2 | Introduction  It is a sad fact that every one of us have people in our lives with whom we do not get along. There are even those with whom we have an ongoing feud. And all of us have been in conflicts with people.  This is also true with nations. As we worship we continue to hear news of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Hundreds have died. The Russian leaders and those of the Ukraine have had a long-standing feud that is now being acted upon. We pray for the cessation of fighting and that they will somehow be reconciled. (Let us pause for silent prayer for this situation.) |
| 3 | One of the most important parts of growing our love relationship with God is to love our fellow human beings. Sure we have difference of opinions and sometimes arguments. But at the end of the day we are called by scripture to reconcile with the one whom we disagree. Our human disagreements that lead to grudges or broken relationships will always undercut our relationship with God. Jesus died on the cross taking our sins so that we could have a fresh start with God and each other. Jesus paid the price to get rid of Satan for all time.  Why is being unreconciled with others so tragic? Because it breaks our relationship with God. In Matthew 5 verse 24, Jesus says that when you go to make an offering to God and you remember a brother or sister has something against you, then you must leave the offering on the altar, go and reconcile with that brother or sister, then return to make the offering. |
| 4 | Now, we don’t have prescribe offerings as was set for Jesus in Jesus’ day; like a grain offering, an animal offering, etc.. But we do have times of prayer where we make confessions and seek God’s forgiveness. And if we have an enduring conflict with another person then I believe our prayers will be heard but God will not act on them while we remain unreconciled.  Allowing an argument to continue and use it as a reason to cut off a relationship has bad consequences between a person and God, as well as within the family.  It is useless to give offerings to God, like your tithe, your talent, your voice, your donations to charity, while you are at enmity with a brother or sister. Oh, the recipients of those offerings will benefit, but the person giving them will not.  Jesus says that his followers should be reconciled with anyone who has something against them. The world seeks reconciliation on limited terms; terms agreed upon, restitution made, and apologies given and received. But Christians are to be reconciled by whatever it takes. |
| 5 | Some say, “But you don’t know how deeply he hurt me! It is unreasonable to ask me to restore the relationship.”  Others may say, “I tried but she would not be appeased.”  The tough thing for us as Christians is that Jesus did not include an exception clause for our reconciliation!  If the person is the enemy, Jesus says we should love him or her. (Matthew 5:44) – “But I say to you love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” If he persecutes you, you are to pray for him. If she publicly humiliates you, you are not to retaliate. (Matthew 5:39) – “If someone strikes you on the right cheek, then turn the other also.” If someone takes advantage of you, you are to give even more than he/she asks. (Matthew 5:41)   * The world preaches, “Assert yourself.” * Jesus taught, “Deny yourself.” * The world warns that you will be constantly exploited if you act as Jesus says.   Jesus’ concern was not that the disciples be treated fairly, but that they show unconditional love to others regardless of how they are treated.  Recall – men spat upon Jesus and nailed him to the cross.  His response is our model, “Father forgive them because they do not know what they are doing.” Luke 23:24 |
| 6 | So, as we try to develop our love relationship with God through Jesus, it is clear grudges and unforgiveness will be a stumbling block in our efforts. If there is one commandment that is constantly disobeyed, it is the mandate to reconcile!  We comfort ourselves by saying, “God knows that I tried to make things right, but my enemy refused.”  God’s word does not say, “Try to be reconciled” but it says, “Be reconciled.”  Is there someone with whom you need to make peace?  Then do what God tells you to do.  Now I know we can’t make a person reconcile to us if they do not want it. But that doesn’t let us off the hook. We still have to forgive and then treat them as if forgiven even if they reject it! It seems like we are wasting our time. But please don’t miss the important thing that God does for you. When you forgive even though it is refused, God lifts that heavy burden from your heart. That relationship that is still broken from the other person’s side is now being mended on your side. You are freed of that sadness and distress. You can treat that person in love even if they reject it. You can pray for them not begrudgingly but with hope! Your life becomes lighter with less burdens. And someday, God will bring that other person around. It may take years and you might never know. But when we follow His command to reconcile we open the door to growing that love relationship with God and position ourselves to hear and know what we are to do for Him. And those grudges and unreconciled enemies will lose their hold upon you, and you will experience freedom!  To reconcile, when successful, becomes a glorious day between those reconciled and gives great glory to God.  But if your efforts to reconcile are rejected, it is sad and frustrating, but your efforts are noticed by God, and you will be relieved of a great burden and freed to grow your relationship with God. And all the while we will continue to work on that reconciliation and depend upon God to someday bring it about! Thanks be to God.  Amen |