

## Reconciliation. Christmas Sermon 2021. Revd David Treharne

### Reconciliation is a massive part of Christmas and the Gospel

For me this year Christmas is all about reconciliation. Reconciliation is a wonderful part of the Christian faith, and is at the heart of the Christmas message. "Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled" we sing in Hark the Herald. Reconciliation is to bring together again... restore friendship and good relationship where there has been conflict, brokenness and estrangement.

### Story

Some of the most beautiful and humbling experiences in my life and ministry have been where I have encountered reconciliation. When division and discord, unforgiveness and hurt, grudge and estrangement are overcome it is amazing. One incident I witnessed a few years ago saw a father and son embrace at a family funeral. Having badly fallen out they had not seen each other for years. As they embraced and forgave, love and tears flowed and the peace and joy experienced by the two of them was extraordinary.

That incident of the father and son reconciling reminded me straight away of the story Jesus told of the Prodigal son... where father and son are brought back together again after being miles apart.

### Vertical piece of the Cross

As we celebrate God coming into the world through Jesus we are reminded once again of the ultimate purpose to reconcile those estranged from God. God and sinners reconciled. Think of that vertical piece of the Cross. Heaven came down to earth through Jesus and united us with the Lord. He has made himself one with us so that we might be one in him. Wow, the beauty of Christmas... Through the birth, life death and resurrection of Jesus we have reconciliation with God resulting in fellowship, friendship and closeness with our Maker and tangible peace and eternal love poured into our hearts and minds. We were estranged from God, but in Christ Jesus we are brought back together. 2 Cor 5:11-21. We were once far off but now we are brought near through Christ (Ephesians 2:13)

If you are feeling estranged and far off from God, now is the time to invite Christ back into your life. He is waiting! Be reconciled.

### ***And divine and human reconciliation is not the whole story. Horizontal***

It's not just about me and God, which is something too many Christians would prefer to miss. There is the horizontal piece of wood on the Cross where '**we**' are meant to be at peace with our fellow human beings... reconciled with and to one another and called to work for reconciliation.

*2 Cor 5:19-20 And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.*

What we have received we are to pass on (pass, love, forgiveness, relationship). Love God and love neighbour. Love one another's! The divine peace poured into us is meant to be

poured out in our lives... our interactions and relationships in family and community... The Word of reconciliation that we have received is meant to become flesh in and through us!

### **Not a doormat**

Now just to note, when I talk about reconciliation I am not talking about people being a compliant doormat in situations of controlling, violent abusive behaviour. That is not reconciliation. Reconciliation involves ***both/all*** parties coming to that place of settlement and peace. What I am talking about is where there is a holistic resolution to the disagreements that lead to argument and estrangement and disengagement between people or communities.

### **Grumbles/Grievances/Hurts/Conflict – what a tangled mess**

“So and so didn’t send me a Christmas card this year. I’m not going to bother again.”  
“They’re always late.” “They never ring.” “They never say thank you.” “Can’t they see I’m stressed.” “They always think they’re right.” “I just had to say.” “They can’t get anything right.” “They think they’re perfect.” “They’ve never liked me.”  
There was no room at the inn. “Right, I’m giving them a 1 rating on Trip Advisor to make them pay.”

Moan, complain, blame, pick, react and guilt! We all get into such a tangled mess with our interactions with one another, the consequences of which can be enormously damaging.

### **Relationship fracturing**

The latest Covid spread has seen anxiety levels rise once again putting relationships under strain. Sadly, I have been hearing of far too many instances of relationship breakdown in and between families and communities. Couple this with the abuse people are experiencing in shops or hospitals together with the tensions in political life in the UK and across the world, **we need reconciliation**. Our country is fractured from years of division... e.g. 2 referenda. **We need reconciliation**... communities, the country, families, friendships brought back together again... restoration of friendship and good relationship where there has been estrangement.... Goodwill towards all people. Regardless of faith it is not good or healthy to living with discord, division and unresolved estrangement.

**Cue the gospel... the Good News.** “peace on earth and mercy mild. God and sinners reconciled!”

Christ the Prince of Peace has come into our lives and reconciled us to God, to banish sin, to conquer the enemies (emotional, psychological, spiritual, relational, political etc...) that steal peace and prevent harmony to the world! We turn to Christ again and find the way of peace and reconciliation.

### **Invitation**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ we need reconciliation with God and each other. We need peace, friendship and community... people need to pull together and that means ditching conflict and the ***death cult of the selfish individualism*** and with God’s help, humbly yet bravely embracing reconciliation, peace, healing and interdependence.

As Christmas arrives with rather familiar uncertainty but perhaps with rather familiar grudges and divisions too perhaps you will join me in thinking about where there is a need for reconciliation in your life and what constructive steps you and I can take in order to bring it about? Life is too short and hostility and division too damaging for us not to engage in the beautiful action of reconciliation. Reconciliation and really hard, confronts deep wounds and requires humility, the vulnerability of a little baby, forgiveness, fresh perspective, listening, patience and an inner will. Go on, send a Christmas or post Christmas message reaching out where you know things are not quite right... a text, email, phone call, card or letter... give a blessing rather than a curse... build a bit of a bridge rather than building walls and barriers. Let us live and work towards the reconciliation God in Christ Jesus came to bring.

As we move into 2022... a year of Community in our Parish, may Christ the Prince of Peace enter our hearts, our homes, our families/ extended families, relationship networks, work places, online dialogues, our domestic political situation and the many desperate situations overseas. May we received a peace that the world cannot give, and may the WORD peace, hope, life, joy, love, mercy, reconciliation, forgiveness and fulfilment become flesh in us and through us... and despite us. We need it. The world needs it!