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6334-2E

GOOD FRIDAY

2 Cor. 5: 14 - 21

Intro. Be ye reconciled to God! As I stand here before you on the Good Friday proclaiming once again the Gospel of reconciliation, I am struck by the thought, "How much better could not one of God's holy angels speak this Gospel-message to you? How much more effective would it not be, if God Himself were to speak to you in a voice from heaven?" But God saw fit to use me, a mortal man, to bring to you the story of the cross. Yes, to me and every other Christian preacher God has given the task of bringing you the "Word of reconciliation." We are in the words of the text, "Ambassadors for Christ." We have been appointed by God to act in Christ's stead. Therefore, I pray God that everyone of you takes heed to the message which is proclaimed to you from this pulpit. It is not the idle philosophies of man which is being preached to you, but it is the Word of God. The very God Himself is, as it were, speaking to you; and He says, "Be ye reconciled to Me!" May God the Hol y Spirit direct each of our hearts and minds to the cross of Calvary -- there to become reconciled to God, to learn and experience God's unspeakable love for us; there to enrich our lives with the Spirit of His Love so that we might truly live our lives unto Christ.

IA1 As we approach the cross and see the dying Savior hanging there, each of us is immediately struck with the thought: He is dying for me." Without exception we were all in need of reconciliation. We all needed to be restored into God's favor.

Our text puts it this way: "If one died for all, then were all dead." We were all dead in trespasses and sins. Since the fall of Adam the nature, the being, the essence of man is so constructed that it is absolutely dead to all that is pleasing to God. Man by nature is completely dead in his spiritual relationship with God. He is not half or even partially alive. There is no life in him. He is, as it were, fumbling around in pitch darkness. Although he lunges out in all directions, trying to attain the goal, trying to find the right path, He cannot by himself.

IA2 In this state of DEATH one can think no thought, do no deed, act no act which is pleasing to God. To be dead means to be without life. Our own works are absolutely worthless for bringing us into favor with God. No matter how good we think our lives to be; no matter how pure we consider our thoughts -- it is all worthless and of no merit in gaining favor with God. To try to reconcile ourselves with God by our own deeds is as useless as trying to knock a hole in a concrete pavement with our fists. Only God could reconcile and appease God. And that is exactly what happened, Jesus Christ, the GOD-MAN, "died for all." He took our lack, our spiritual deadness, upon Himself so that we might again live. He died our death. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." God did what man could not do.

IB1 That is the message of reconciliation which is brought to you from the lips of Christian pastors. That is God's message. It is through this message that the Holy Spirit engenders faith

into our hearts; it is through this message that the miracle of conversion takes place. Thus it is, that in Christ Jesus we are made the righteousness of God. Through the cross of Calvary and only through this cross do we become a new creation. God made the sinless Christ to be sin for us. And so, God now looks upon us as righteous and perfect people. Looking at us through the scope of His crucified Son, He sees us as holy and sinless. Truly, what a priceless possession this Word of reconciliation is, this message of how we, sinners who are worthy of nothing but death and damnation, come into favor with God. God grant that each of you has taken this message into your hearts. Treasure it! It is the gift of God! It is a miracle wrought by the Holy Spirit.

IB2 Being a new creation in Christ the old things are passed away. Our text says: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." Our hearts and our minds are changed completely. We live IN CHRIST for His honor and glory. We are intimately connected with our Savior. No more are we motivated with selfish interests, thinking only of what will benefit us; no more do we allow our base and sinful desires to run wild; no longer are we resentful of others and what they have in this life; no longer are we puffed up with pride and our own human achievements! "The love of Christ constraineth us." The love of Christ controls us. We need merely to raise our eyes and behold Him on the cross, "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." How humble we become, knowing that He hangs there not for what He has done,

but rather for what we have done. When our hearts become thus numbed by the tremendous magnitude of Christ's love, the old things, the evil desires and interests are immediately blotted out. We think only of our crucified Savior and what will please Him, for "He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again."

2A <u>This living unto Christ means that we love all men even as Christ did.</u> "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh." No fleshly considerations are to enter into our judgment of others. Juman achievement and social status play no part in our judgment of others. The love of Christ demands this of us. We love all men no matter if they are rich or poor, cultured or uncultured, sick, blind, crippled, or what have you. Anytime a Christian will not sit in the gutter with a drunken sot and proclaim the love of Christ to him -- he is not worthy of the name Christian. Christ died on the cross for all men. He would have all to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. We no longer judge things as to what will benefit us most. The dignity of our cultural status has nothing whatsoever to do with our testifying to the love of Christ. There is nothing in me that makes me any better than anyone else. I too have sinned and come short of the glory of God, Christ desires that the prostitute be saved as well as the statesman and diplomat. No sin is too grievous that it cannot be washed pure in the blood of the cross of Calvary. Nobody is so wretched that he

cannot hear this Word of reconciliation and with the held of God live his life unto Christ.

2B We who have experienced this miracle of conversion, this rebirth by the power of God's Spirit, have a great responsibility placed upon us. We are all in a sense preachers, proclaimers and testifiers of the Gospel-message. God has entrusted to each of us the Word of reconciliation. Whenever we speak of our crucified Lord, telling how He took away our sins upon the accursed tree, we are proclaiming the "power of God unto salvation." Whether you are a doctor, lawyer, mechanic, factory worker; whether you are a housewife, stenographer, nurse, bookkeeper, or washwoman; no matter what you are a time will come when you will have the opportunity to speak of Christ to someone else. Should you fail to use this opportunity, perhaps a soul will be lost. May God fill us with an earnest and wholehearted zeal to speak of Jesus, our Savior.

2C Oftentimes ou r actions lead others to the cross. We are now living unto Christ and not unto ourselves. God help us to accomplish this fact! May God fill each of us with the love of Christ to such an extent that we never offend a weaker brother. Can we lead others to Christ, if we continually take the name of the Lord in vain, profaning the name of Him Who so dearly loved us that He have His life on our behalf? Can we lead others to Christ, if we partake in drunken and riotous parties? Can we lead others to the cross by telling filthy and immoral jokes? RATHER, we lead others to Christ by leading chaste and decent lives. Here is where GOOD WORKS fit in.

Good works do not merit our salvation, but they are a fruit of faith; they do proclaim the love of Christ in us; they do show others that we are Christian; they do lead others to the cross where in the blood of the precious lamb all sins are washed as white as snow.

Concl. O Lord Jesus fill us so completely with Thy love that we may at all times and in all places proclaim Thy word of reconciliation to all men.

AMEN.

A note of generality runs through your paragraphs. Truth is expressed, but through a channel worn deep through much repetition. Try to use new and brighter and more graphic ways of expressing yourself. When you pin point sin, you dwell on extreme sins which may touch only a small segment of your congregation. I don't want to rule out the examples you mention, but I do want to suggest that you use sin material common to many, to all members of the parish.