

**Holy Cross, Daggett and St. Mark, Wallace Lutheran Churches, Michigan**

**The Second Sunday in Lent**

**March 1, 2015**

**Romans 5:1-11**

*Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.*

*You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

*Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! 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! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.*

Have you ever made a decision which negatively impacts the way people think about you? One which might even impact you for the rest of your life? I read an article this week about a man who recently had this happen to him. One decision he made changed the way thousands of people thought about him. I know his decision might have even impacted the way some of you view him. Who is this man who made such a decision which impacted the way others view him? His name is Brandon Bostick.

A lot of you painfully remember the details, but I will refresh the memories of those who didn't watch or care about the game. The Packers were winning the NFC title game with about two minutes to go. It seemed all they needed to do would be recover an onside kick and they would be on to the Super Bowl. However, Brandon Bostick muffed the onside kick and the Packers eventually lost the game. The muffed kick led a lot of people to blame him for the Packers' loss.

I will let him tell you about it with words from an article he wrote about the game for the website Sports Illustrated.com. **"I was supposed to block for Jordy Nelson, who was right behind me. But when the ball appeared in front of me, just floating in the air, my mind went blank. The ball was in front of me and I wanted to grab it. I jumped up, I reached for it and my life changed forever. I don't know how many death threats I received, but there have been a lot. My phone rang on the morning of Feb. 16."**

**"I had just woken up and didn't recognize the number. The caller said he was with the Packers organization, and immediately I understood: I was getting cut. They said they have their guys, and that I didn't develop as fast as they had hoped. They said the onside kick had something to do with it, but that's all they said. I feel as if there's a little more to it than that. With how close we were to reaching the Super Bowl, I think a lot of people in the organization couldn't live with me being there."**

Brandon Bostick's decision to try and catch an onside kick dramatically impacted his life. It led to people threatening his life. It helped him to lose his job. It impacted the way countless thousands of people view him. It is a decision he wishes he could take back and one I am sure you can relate with. We all have made decisions in life which we consider stupid and have ruined relationships. We all have made decisions in life that we wish we could go back and change to help save a relationship. We all have.

We all have made decisions in our lives which ruin relationships and turn friends into enemies. It is at times like these we need someone who will help us to become reconciled with our former friends. Reconciled? What does it mean to be reconciled to a former friend? Well, we can define reconcile like this: **to (cause to) become friendly or peaceable again, as by settling a quarrel; to compose or settle (a quarrel, dispute, etc.); to bring into agreement.**

Reconciliation means to take two parties who are at odds and helping them to work out their differences. It means their former friendship is restored and the former words and deeds which caused so much strife are forgiven. Reconciliation is one of the most rewarding and positive things which can happen in our lives. It is truly wonderful to be able to let go of the hate and show someone love again. It leads you to want to give thanks and rejoice that your relationship has been restored.

Our lesson today focuses on a reconciliation which leads us such rejoicing. Who is involved in this reconciliation? It is the reconciliation of God with us. The apostle Paul lays out this wonderful message

for us today. He reminds us we were at one time God's enemies and we were powerless to do anything to please God. He lists this several times by saying, **"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly."**

**"While we were still sinners...For if, when we were God's enemies."** Paul calls us ungodly sinners who were powerless to please God because we were his enemies. Enemies don't like each other. They attack each other. They try to undermine each other. They try to defeat each other. Paul calls us God's enemies to remind us there was hatred, discord and strife between us and between God. Sadly, we still experience this struggle in our lives since there is a part of us which still struggles against God.

What do I mean by this? Well, what is your reaction when these things happen: How do you react when a family of six loses a home in a fire like just happened to a family in Carney? How do you react when you try to eat certain foods but you can't because it makes you hurt inside? How do you react when all you want to do is get out of the house, yet you can't because it is too cold or your body doesn't let you? How do you react when you don't get your way in life?

Our reaction in these situations tells a lot about us and reveals the part of us which remains at odds with God. We like to question things we don't understand and we grow frustrated and angry when we are unable to understand something. Sometimes our anger and frustration in these situations is directed towards God. We might not like or understand why a house burned down, and it could lead us to angrily ask why God allowed it to happen?

We might become frustrated by the fact we can't eat our favorite foods and we might direct our anger at God by asking, "Why can't you just change my body and let me eat what I love to eat?" We might grow tired and impatient when it stays cold outside or our body doesn't let us leave the house. We might walk around bitter and grumpy because we don't get our way. Do you know what? All of these negative reactions show there is part of us which is fighting against God.

All these negative reactions say to God, "I don't like the way you're doing your job. I could and would do a better job." How does God react to this attitude? He isn't happy about it. He is downright angry about it. He is mad at our attitude because it is arrogant and ungrateful. It is arrogant because it elevates the created above the creator. It is ungrateful because we wouldn't even exist without him. We are in need of reconciliation with God.

**"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! 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!"**

God in his love sent Jesus into this world to reconcile us to himself. He sent Jesus into this world to create peace between us and God. We were powerless to create this peace. We loved being God's enemies and rebelling against him. However, it broke God's heart to see us rebel against him. He didn't

create us to be rebellious brats who were his enemies. He created us to be his children who loved and served him. God created this world as a perfect world, but Adam and Eve destroyed it.

They took the fruit which he told them not to eat, ate it and doomed humanity to endless rebellion against God. However, this is where Jesus comes in. Jesus came to crush our rebellion and put an end to it. He did it by demonstrating the full extent of God's love for us. **"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."**

God's anger over our sin demanded a perfect sacrifice in order for us to be reconciled to him. Jesus provided the perfect sacrifice for our sin. He willingly came into this world and kept God's law perfectly in our place. He willingly came into this world and offered up his life for his enemies. He did this because he had one single goal: he wanted to end the conflict over sin and restore peace between God and man. This is exactly what his death has done for us.

**"Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! 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!"** Jesus' death declares us not guilty in God's sight. It means we have been put into a right relationship with God. Jesus' death reconciles us to God and gives us eternal life.

What will this reconciliation lead us to do? **"Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."** It leads us to rejoice because we have peace with God. The war over sin is finished. We are forgiven in God's sight. This rejoicing and peace doesn't naturally come to us. It comes to us through the gift of faith. Paul says, **"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."**

The Holy Spirit is the only one who can work this faith into our heart. By nature we fight against his power because our sinful nature longs to take God's place. We talked about this issue before. However, the Holy Spirit creates inside of us a new self which longs to follow God. Our new self engages in a struggle against the old. It fights and wrestles with the old self and longs to follow God's will. Yet, the old self doesn't want this and fights back and round and round it goes.

Will we ever be able to put an end to this struggle? No, we won't. Our new self will struggle with the old until the day we die. How can we prevent the old from winning the battle? **"Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."** We will win the battle when we continue to rejoice in the reconciliation which Christ has won for us. Amen.