

Exodus 17:1-7  
Psalm 95  
Romans 5:1-11  
John 4:5-42

## **Sermon March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

### *Jesus Our Reconciler*

Sometimes we feel disconnected from God due to the busyness in our lives. Sometimes we feel disconnected from God during the suffering we face. Sometimes we feel disconnected from God when we face something like our current pandemic. Sometimes we feel disconnected from God, and we can't nail down the reason why.

Lent gives us an opportunity to reconnect with God. Lent calls us back to our essential practices of faith and to intentionally invest more time and energy into nurturing our relationship with God. We do this through prayer, scripture, worship, and in service to others. Though the latter two may be harder to participate in during these uncertain times.

Unfortunately, in our human history our relationship with God has experienced some challenges to say the least. In the garden scene in the book of Genesis we see that we made some unhealthy choices that led to the break down in our relationship with God. God never abandoned us. But, our relationship was never the same as it was in the garden. Of course, there were times of covenant relationship, but there were also times of exile and wandering in the wilderness.

Then as we hear in our gospels and the early church writings, Jesus came into our lives and reconciled us to God. Giving us an opportunity to reconnect with God in a more personal way. Hence, we as the church have created seasons like Lent to remind us of this opportunity.

In today's gospel, we see Jesus' reconciling love at work as he tries to heal a few different relationships that have broken down. First, in connection with this story, and in his greater ministry, Jesus tries to reconcile the relationship between men and women through his personal relationship with women. In our story today, we hear that Jesus meets this Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, and invites her into a conversation with him about theology. In this day, women were not allowed to converse with men in authority about anything religious. For Jesus to treat the Samaritan woman as an equal. To give her the same respect and dignity as everyone else. To be an example to the other men who follow him so they will do likewise. These are genuine acts of reconciliation in a relationship that has been severed since Adam took power over Eve when he named her without God's permission in the book of Genesis.

When Jesus treats this Samaritan woman as he treats anyone of his disciples Jesus is empowering this woman to be a messenger. Later in the gospel of John the

resurrected Christ empowers Mary Magdalene near the empty tomb to be a messenger as well. Jesus throughout his ministry is trying to heal the brokenness in the relationship between men and women. To treat women as equals empowering them to be equal participants in the work of the church. Reconciling us, men and women to one another.

Second, Jesus is trying to reconcile the Jews with the Samaritans in his encounter with the Samaritan woman. In fact, Jesus comes to say to this Samaritan woman that both Samaritans and Jews will worship together one day. So, Jesus is making a big statement, and later John by retelling this story, saying to their audience that Jesus has come to reconcile the relationship between the Jews and the Samaritans. A relationship that has been severed for many years.

It is telling that where this dialogue takes place is at Jacob's well, a prominent place for both Samaritans and Jews. If we take out our history books for a moment, Samaritans and Jews are part of the same group of people, the Israelites. Unfortunately, when the kingdom splits in two the Samaritans are connected to the Northern Kingdom and the Jews to the Southern Kingdom. Thus, begins many years of hate towards one another. Yet, meeting at a place where Jacob was, reminds them of a time when they gathered together.

Third, Jesus is reconciling this woman to a community that has judged her harshly. This woman is coming to gather water at noon for a reason. It is probably 35 degrees Celsius. No one in their right mind would gather water at that time of day unless they were avoiding people. So, when Jesus reveals his identity to her, she is moved to go back into the community who judged her, and share this good news. In response the people believe and follow her back to Jesus to hear what he has to say. The woman's relationship with her community is reconciled.

So, we see in this story, and really throughout the gospels that Jesus spends a lot of his time healing and reconciling relationships.

As the church, we are invited into continuing Jesus' work in the world. A huge part of this work is trying to heal and reconcile relationships.

In a world, where we have more access to seeing the suffering and pain that results from the break down of relationships in our communities it is so vital that we continue to do this work in the world.

Our national church gathers together every three years. Within the last two or three conventions we have seen policies and statements created from the people who gather at these conventions encouraging us to participate in this reconciling work together.

Leading up to the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation. The same Reformation where we witnessed the largest break down of relationships within the church in our history. We started doing more work with our Catholic brothers and sisters hoping to start building bridges towards some form of reconciliation. We worshipped more together. We had conversations around some of the issues that led to the breakdown of our relationship with one another. We envisioned ways we could move forward together.

Here at All Saints we worked with our brothers and sisters from St. Patrick's in intentional study to grow in relationship with one another. To rebuild some of those bridges we knocked down during the Reformation. Now within the last couple of years these conversations and opportunities to grow together has led to St. Patrick's being a partner with us in our annual clothing give away. It has led to the women's group reaching out to our Wednesday morning group to build bridges and grow in relationship. Reconciliation doesn't happen over night, but takes one small step at a time.

In response to the devastation and pain left by the impact the residential schools have had on our indigenous people, we have worked harder as protestant churches to work towards reconciliation with our Indigenous people. In Red Deer last year some of us gathered across the Alberta Synod to participate in a blanket exercise that really helped us see the importance of healing and reconciling our broken relationship with our Indigenous neighbors. Churches are encouraged to build relationships wherever possible with our Indigenous neighbors.

At the interfaith level we are doing more to invite the indigenous voices into our work towards harmony and peace in our world.

In response to the growing trend of Islamophobia in our society our national church encouraged us to find ways to build bridges of healing and reconciliation with our Muslim neighbors. Unfortunately, we have a long past of violence and hate towards one another that has hurt our human relationship.

At All Saints and in Calgary we are doing lots of work with our Muslim friends to learn and grow in relationship with one another. Being leaders in this healing and reconciling work. From gathering with our Turkish Muslim friends to learn more about each other, to doing a study to learn more about our Muslim friends, we have worked towards this reconciliation.

Jesus came into our lives to reconcile us with God and to reconcile us with one another. At the heart of Jesus' ministry is healing and reconciliation of broken relationships.

We are inspired by Jesus' reconciling love to participate in this reconciling love in our world. Hoping one day to live in a world where people can live in harmony and peace with one other. Loving one another as Jesus loves us.

**Let us pray**, reconciling God, we give thanks that you sent your Son to reconcile us to you and to one another. Encourage us with your love to be part of this healing and reconciling action in our world. Give us patience and wisdom to be able to do this work. And give us hope in your promise that one day you will come and make everything right. Establishing your kingdom come. A kingdom where everyone will experience your healing and reconciliation. **Amen.**

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