



God's Design For Reconciliation: From Pain to Peace

The good news of the Gospel is that we can once again be united with God and one another, in harmony in our relationships and wow is that good news!

It goes beyond any blessing we could ever wish for. It goes beyond riches, pleasures, treasures or status. To have that reconciliation as the Bible calls it, putting right with God and with one another.

The reality is that is that it doesn't come easy, in fact it only comes in one way and that is the way of the Cross.

Colossians 1v 20 says "God dwelt in Christ and through him reconciled to himself all things both in heaven and on earth by making peace through His blood shed on the Cross."

Let's look at some of the things that we can learn from how Jesus lived in reconciliation with God and us even as He went through the Cross. This is the pathway of reconciliation, it is very difficult to walk but it is the way of life and we will look at each of the things Jesus said at the Cross, seven in total.

The first two I would highlight around the heading ACKNOWLEDGE THE PAIN, the second two around the heading ABSOLVE THE PERPERTRATOR and the last three around the heading ACCEPT THE PEACE OF GOD.

ACKNOWLEDGE THE PAIN

The first two, Jesus said:

1. "I thirst" -John 19:28
2. "My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?" Matthew 27:46

Both of these are an acknowledgment of pain. "I thirst" is an acknowledgement of the physical desperation that He experienced, the physical lack, the identification of pain in that very tangible way.

The other acknowledgement of pain "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" is the acknowledgement of him taking the sin of the world upon himself. In fact the Bible says becoming sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). This is so important if we are ever truly going to know reconciliation is that we identify or acknowledge one another's pain. It is so important to be real about our own pain and it's so important to be empathetic with other's pain. Not bringing judgement about who is right and who is wrong, just hearing and understanding, seeing another person's pain.

ABSOLVE THE PERPERTRATOR

The second two things that I would like to look at that Jesus said on the cross are ABSOLVE THE PERPERTRATOR. He said two amazing things.

1. "Father forgive them for they know not what they do" - Luke 23:34
2. He said to the thief on the cross who said "Remember me", "Today you will be with me in paradise." - Luke 23:42-43

It is striking how freely Jesus forgives, how completely He absolves the perpetrators. Live, real time as He is literally suffering the greatest injustice that will ever happen on planet earth.

The thief has certainly sinned, is part of the reason Jesus is on the Cross and yet as the thief turns to Him, there is complete acceptance in Christ, complete forgiveness. Even to those who are mocking Him and deriding Him from below the Cross, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do".

There is a place for the Church to be mobilized and on the front foot in addressing systemic issues in our context that need to be changed, but that is for another video. The best action for change of inequality and inequity in the world will come from hearts that are at absolute peace and not hankering after the things of this world.

It's so important that we have this absolution in our hearts. It's a bit like holding a red-hot coal in our hands and thinking that by carrying on holding it we are going to make sure that we deal with it. The best thing to do when you know that you have been hurt and it is painful is to let it go, completely release it to God, back to the fire, Our God is a Consuming Fire (Hebrews 12:29), 'Vengeance is mine' says the Lord (Romans 12:19). In our hearts we let go of all of those who have hurt us and every system that has been rigged against us and allow God to bring His vengeance, His justice ultimately.

That's a heart attitude, and as I say we will look at another clip at how we can be mobilized from a heart of peace and reconciliation to bring real change in the world.

ACCEPT THE PEACE OF GOD

The third aspect of reconciliation at the heart that I want to highlight today is the other 3 things that Jesus says which are:

1. "Woman, behold your son"-John 19:26-27
2. "It is finished"- John 19:30
3. "Into Your hands I commend my spirit"- Luke 23:46

These are the things that show the peace of God amidst the chaos. Jesus while hanging on the Cross sees his mother and the 'Disciple he loves' and knows how they will feel bereft as He dies and put in place a mechanism for the greatest mediation of peace for them even in the midst of His pain, this peace of God that is passing all understanding alive in Him. He says "it is finished!" What a declaration of peace! What a moment for each of us as we run the race and get to that final finish line. It is finished! What a moment of peace! He then says "into your hands I commend my spirit", this moment which ultimately relies on His relationship with the Father beyond all the things of this world, my hope, my peace, my safety, my security "into your hands" he takes death. The Author of Life experiencing death with this absolute peace- "I commit my spirit into your hands".

I want to encourage us through all that we are going through, each one fighting a great battle to outwork this principle of peace and reconciliation that Jesus did at the Cross, **ACKNOWLEDGE PAIN, ABSOLVE THE PERPETRATOR and ACCEPT THE PEACE OF GOD.**

God bless you!