

## INI-SDG

In the Name of Jesus – To God Alone the Glory

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**3.8.2009 Lent 2 – St. Stephen Lutheran (West Bay) Mountain View, CA – Pastor N. Radichel**

Half the marriages in this country will end in divorce...even more so in the first two years of marriage. And over half the marriages that end in divorce end by the popular reason of “Irreconcilable Differences.” What does that mean? The legal definition is “Differences between spouses that are considered sufficiently severe to make married life together more or less impossible.” To me that seems like that would be able to be applied to ANY relationship wouldn’t it? If you can have irreconcilable differences with a husband or wife, than it seems to follow that you could have differences sufficiently severe enough to end a relationship with a boyfriend or girlfriend, a neighbor, and maybe even with one of your children. We might laugh at the last example, but what are some of the reasons children are orphaned?

Is there any scriptural wisdom on the subject of irreconcilable differences? Thankfully there is. When Peter asked how many times he ought to forgive someone who sinned against him, how did Jesus respond? Was it up to 7 times? No. But rather 70 times 7. (Mt 18:21) In other words, Jesus makes it pretty clear that irreconcilable differences WAS NOT a part of His vocabulary. In fact, He made it very clear that before coming before the Lord’s altar one should FIRST go and be reconciled to your brother. (Mt 5:24) Today is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Lent otherwise known in the Latin as “Reminiscere” Sunday; or a remembering of what our Savior’s road to the cross means for us! Therefore we pray that throughout the next week we will remember:

### **Theme: HOPE...IN BEING RECONCILED!**

- Verses 1-5 - We have the kind of HOPE that rejoices in suffering.
- Verses 6-8 - We believe in the One who demonstrates this HOPE.
- Verses 9-11 - We rejoice in the HOPE that has taken us from Anger to Love.

The Grace of the Father, the Mercy of His Son, and the Peace of the Holy Spirit be with each of you. Amen.

**NIV Romans 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 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. 3 Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope.**

- We have the kind of HOPE that rejoices in suffering.

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Again we see that word “Therefore” here at the start of our text. What is being drawn to our attention this time? Paul makes the connection here between the righteousness we have from God and the effect that this righteousness has in our lives. Throughout Romans Paul quite clearly shows the difference between the universal justification of sins that Christ paid for ALL people, but also the NEED for faith in this justification to be in the heart of an individual. That’s why we read that **since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ**. It is through the Work of Christ that all people are declared not guilty of their sins, and it is through the Word of Christ that believers stand in this faith we have by the grace of God. Just as Jesus said to His disciples, ***These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)***

Verse 2 describes this hope in which we stand. It is a hope that we rejoice in. It is a hope that we use to glorify God in prayer and sing hymns of praise. But it goes beyond that also. Through Christ, we have the kind of HOPE that rejoices in suffering. Suffering here could also be translated “tribulation” as Jesus just reminded us that we WOULD HAVE in the world. The word tribulation brings to me the thought of troubled waters. There are various sizes of waves one could observe from the beach or on a sea or ocean,

and likewise in each of our lives there are various sizes of trouble, suffering, distressing things, and difficult circumstances that challenge us quite often. But it is what our Savior, who Pilates our lives, inspires Paul to remind us is that **we also rejoice in our sufferings, because... suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.** An athlete or student struggles and is tested over and over again in order to persevere. Likewise, we also are tested by our Coach and Teacher, Jesus Christ, in order to give us the hope and confidence that comes with overcoming both the pressures and opposition we face everyday...with Him by our side.

Psalm 11:5 says that *The LORD tests the righteous*, and Paul acknowledges in his epistles *For to this end I also wrote, that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things. (2 Cor. 2:9)* We hear David pray to the LORD... *Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have relieved me in my distress; Have mercy on me, and hear my prayer. (Psalm 4:1)* The LORD tells us in Fatherly love to *Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me. (Psalm 50:15)* One Biblical scholar put it this way, *“Hold up the high ideal for the Christian after, and because of, his being set right with God. It is one thing to submit to or endure tribulations without complaint, but it is another to find ground of glorying in the midst of them as Paul exhorts here.” (Robertson)* Remember Job. You and I can **be of good cheer...** we can **rejoice in sufferings...** because Jesus tells us that He has **overcome the world.** Therefore, He wants to develop in us, a character that rejoices and glorifies God at ALL times- in our HOPE of this promise.

**5 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. 6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

- We believe in the One who demonstrates this HOPE.

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The peace we have in Christ is not some kind of emotional high that we get from becoming or being a believer. The peace we have verse 1 says comes **through our Lord Jesus Christ.** HE creates and sustains our faith through His Word alone. But this, unfortunately, is where objections typically come in. This is where the terms “free” and “gift” somehow no longer seem to apply for some Christians. The cooperation of faith, decision theology, choosing to believe, or accepting Christ, all give the impression that we have something good in us that helps us receive and invite Christ into our hearts. But if faith in Christ truly justifies as Paul mentioned in verse 1, if faith truly is a gift from God, then ANY cooperation we think we might have in our faith would be to say that there is ALSO a possibility of us cooperating with Christ’s redemption on the cross...because that too was a gift GIVEN to us.

Verse 6 says we were **powerless**, verse 8 says that **while we were still sinners**, jumping ahead to verse 10 it says **we were God’s enemies...** when Christ died for the ungodly. *You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit... (John 15:16)* ...Jesus says. Ephesians chapter 2 puts the amount of positive effort you contributed to any faith you have by reminding you that *God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved). (Eph 2:4,5)* What can anything dead do on its own? Verse 5 of our text says **HOPE does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us.** God would have us only say “thank you” for the living waters He pours into our souls through His Word. A perfect father provides everything NEEDED without request. Our Father *desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Tim 2:4)* In THESE reasons we start to appreciate what verse 8 says, **God demonstrates his own love for us...** because CONTRARY to popular debate, we did NOT deserve it. The Justification of ALL sins HAS been paid by Christ, **at just the right time** verse 6 says. *When the fullness of the time had come God sent forth His Son... (Gal 4:4)* and in the place of the ungodly, God would declare us not-guilty through the bloody sacrifice of His spotless Lamb... Jesus Christ.

**9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! 10 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! 11 Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.**

- We rejoice in the HOPE that has taken us from Anger to Love.

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Verse 9 really does demonstrate what Christ has done for us through His Work and Word. The picture in your bulletin of Michelangelo's "Creation of Adam" which can be seen on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel is known world wide. I appreciate the separation between the finger of Adam and the finger of God. Because of, and since Adam and Eve's fall into sin, their sin and ours has caused this separation and rebellion of mankind against God. God's wrath and anger against us is just! But He is the One who justifies! **10 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!**

The Word reconcile gives the idea of "bringing something back together that was apart." We might also think of it as putting someone into friendship with an enemy. Christ did that for us. Therefore, bringing back our first thoughts about the reconciliation of any relationship: marriage, child, family member, friend, or enemy...what are we left with? Is there any potential for "irreconcilable differences?" May we NEVER say yes, there is! For in doing so, according to our own sinful nature, that is EXACTLY what YOU and I deserve to hear from God! One act of God points to 2 truths worth rejoicing in no matter what happens in our lives.

**Through Christ:**

1. We have been JUSTIFIED! (Think of Jesus' parable where the King forgave the enormous debt of His servant).
2. We have been RECONCILED! (Think of Jesus' parable where the Father welcomed home the prodigal son). That's also how our Heavenly Father will embrace us at our heavenly home.

Now please turn to the front of your bulletin. You'll see 2 Corinthians 5 where Paul reminds all Christians, ***Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (17-21)***

Our time of grace here on earth is short. We have the Word of Reconciliation in Christ. What will we do with it? How will we support it? How might we hurt it? We ourselves have **HOPE...in being Reconciled!** Hope because we have been reconciled to God through Christ. And hope because Christ will reconcile our life together with His in Heaven when our last day comes! In view of these truths, we REJOICE because:

- We have the kind of HOPE that rejoices in suffering.
- We believe in the One who demonstrates this HOPE.
- We rejoice in the HOPE that has taken us from Anger to Love...  
both in God, and Lord-willing in all of our relationships in our lives.

**11 Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. AMEN!**

*This peace of God, that passes all understanding will guard and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.*