

The Cross: A Point of Reconciliation

Talking about reconciliation is timely for the church, the family and the nation

- **Church:** As CoU we have had our own struggles with clergy and a bishop taking the Archbishop to secular courts of law. In one diocese members of the church planted needles on the chair in order to harm a bishop elect.
- **Family:** We see increased cases in Uganda of divorce, and married people living apart. We have all seen cases people whose faces were badly damaged because someone poured acid on them.
- **Nation:** The presidential elections are being disputed in court. Many of us are asking, how will the judges deal with this? A more important question is what will happen after the Supreme Court renders its judgement? What if the elections are rendered null and void what is the way forward for Uganda? IRCU organized great and memorable debates. Is there more they can do after now that February 18th happened?

You see friends, there is no way we can avoid discussing the place of reconciliation, especially in light of the cross.

Definition: To be reconciled is to be restored to relationship or harmony. It is mending fences and bringing an end to estrangement. Reconciliation therefore touches these aspects:

- ✚ Mending of broken relationships, between individuals or groups of people.
- ✚ Restoring of relationships
- ✚ Operationalizing forgiveness in community

The cross is an amazing dynamic when it comes to being reconciled with God and with one another. Yet, the power does not come from the object of the cross but from the One who died on the cross. 2 Corinthians 5:14-21

Jesus died to reconcile us to God. Jesus brings us back into relationship with God and that ought to change all other relationships, especially for those who are in Him.

Reconciliation, in light of the cross is about acceptance, forgiveness, a commitment to restore the bond. First with God and then with one another.

Amazing things happen around the time of Jesus' crucifixion:

11 And Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him. Then, arraying him in splendid clothing, he sent him back to Pilate. 12 And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day, for before this they had been at enmity with each other. Luke 23:11-12

- Even this unjust trial of an innocent Messiah, brought about reconciliation between rulers.

1.0 Christ's love Compels us

14 For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; 15 and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

Christ's love compels us, constrains us, controls us. It is not our love for Christ but Christ's love for us.

- ✚ He is saying that there is a new dynamic at work within us
- ✚ Christ has died for us, therefore we have all died. He is saying we all share in the benefit of His death. He is using a legal construct: the death of Jesus Christ has taken care of our obligation.
 - ✓ Some countries have a law which exempts a citizens of a few other countries from paying taxes. That means that a treaty was signed which takes care of this.

- ✚ In light of what Christ has accomplished for us, we are called to live for Christ. Not self-centred. Not selfishly but for Christ.

Jesus told a parable of an unmerciful servant (Matthew 18:21-35)

- This man had a big debt he was not able to pay
- The Master/Creditor forgave him
- This man refused to forgive his fellow servant who had a smaller debt

Here what his master says:

³² "Then, after he had summoned him, his master said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me.'³³ Shouldn't you also have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' Matthew 18:32-33

Here then is the punchline: "you cannot live as if you have not been reconciled to God. In love and mercy, Christ did what you needed to be reconciled you to God. You are compelled by that love to be reconciled to one another.

2.0 The new vision in Christ

16 From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

- i. Paul acknowledges how he used to be prejudiced about Christ. The Lord opened his eyes - Jesus to him was no longer the Nazarene insurrectionist but Christ the Lord. Seeing Jesus for who He is changed Paul. His eyes were opened.
 - Jesus needs to touch our eyes again so that we do not see people walking like trees (Mark 8:22-26)
 - We often see problems, a tribe, a mistake, an issue, a danger
- ii. Because of what Christ has done, we can see a new creation in people. Here is the challenge to people who belong to Christ but cannot see eye to eye! Can we be near the cross and far from one another? Is our experience of the cross real or it is an illusion?

Paul had his own experience of reconciling two estranged people: Philemon and Onesimus. His argument was, now that Onesimus is in Christ, Philemon, please receive him as a fellow brother.

 - Brother, sister, what is affecting your vision?

- Is it politics, competition at the workplace, land issues, business?
- Do you realize how hatred and un-forgiveness can push you further and further away from the cross?

As CoU we have a big need for reconciliation among brethren. I am referring to the rift in the fellowship which is more than 40 years old! The Namirembe fellowship and the Kawempe fellowship. My reading of the history seems to anchor the problem in a personality conflict. I pray that the Lord will bring healing to this division.

"Judging others makes us blind, whereas love is illuminating. By judging others we blind ourselves to our own evil and to the grace which others are just as entitled to as we are."

— Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*

3.0 Called to be agents of reconciliation

18 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are

ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

- ✚ Having been reconciled to God, He call us to be agents of reconciliation
- ✚ On the cross Jesus prayed, "Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing". Do you think this prayer was heard? Having been forgiven, we alert the world that God, creator of the universe is offering forgiveness. It is free forgiveness because it is fully paid for.
- ✚ Our calling is important because many people have the wrong focus in life. We seek to call them back to God.
 - Some oppose God
 - Some are running away from God to other substitutes
 - Some are enslaved in the demonic world - a sad story of a PK who refused his father from being prayed for and is in witchcraft.
 - Some of us have seen how much havoc alcohol can do to a life, to a marriage, to a family, to a community

18 For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. 19 Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. 20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. Philippians 3:18-21.

4.0 Pursuing reconciliation through the cross

- ✚ When we gaze at the cross, we see the big debt we owed which God cancelled. Relationally it becomes unjustifiable to hold anyone in debt.
- ✚ At the foot of the cross we are challenged to examine all our relationships
- ✚ As heralds of reconciliation it begins with you and me.

There truths on this subject which we must embrace:

1. Reconciliation is costly, but it is worth the price. When there is no reconciliation any relationship become artificial and insincere.

Story of husband and wife who were angry at each other and were not talking to each other. Man writes a note to wife to wake him up at 5.30 am. At 5.30 am wife writes a note to husband: "It is 5.30 am please wake up"

The whole thing does not work.

2. The motivation for reconciliation is the example of Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit in one's life.

Unreconciled to God and with one another, the regenerated person will always feel uncomfortable. It is better to be restored to fellowship with the Holy Spirit than to win an argument or a fight.

3. If you wait for the other to take the first step, it will never happen. When the Lord reveals to you the need for reconciliation you must be the one to take the first step.

Mrs Kigozi eulogizing the late husband - Canon Peter Kigozi: "He was quick to say we are sorry please forgive us"

Brethren I call upon you to pray that we as the church shall lead in fostering reconciliation in this political climate.

God forgave my sin in Jesus' name.

I've been born again in Jesus' name

And in Jesus' name I come to you

To share his love as he told me to.

He said 'Freely, freely you have received;, freely, freely give.

Go in my name, and because you believe others will know that I live.

All pow'r is giv'n in Jesus' name

in earth and heav'n in jesus name

And in Jesus' name I come to you

To share his pow'r as he told me to.

He said 'Freely, freely you have received;, freely, freely give.

Go in my name, and because you believe others will know that I live.

God gives us life in Jesus' name

he lives in us in Jesus' name

And in Jesus' name I come to you

To share his peace as he told me to.