

SERMON – FAITH LUTHERAN – ADVENT MIDWEEK 2/3 – 2 COR 5:20-21 – DEC 2012

2 Corinthians 5:20-21 20 Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. 21 For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Dear friends in Christ,

It may not be the easiest thing, but it is certainly very straight-forward.

To be an ambassador – there are 3 basic things that you need to know –

As an ambassador –

- 1) need to know who we are serving
- 2) need to know the message
- 3) need to know the target audience

So for example if you were to be the American ambassador to Great Britain, or one of the other 180 places in which we have ambassadors around the world, you would

- 1) need to know your own country, your own president very well
- 2) need to know what is to be America's policy toward that particular nation
- 3) you will need to know something about that country, your target audience – perhaps have a thorough knowledge of that country's history, know their relationship with the US over the years.

So yes – being an ambassador is straight-forward – it is all about KNOWING.

It is no different when it comes to us tonight talking about being Advent Ambassadors – we need to know the same three things concerning that One who is coming.

- 1) We need to know who we are serving. Paul makes that very plain – in using the same phrase twice – “on behalf of Christ” you are ambassadors – we implore you “on Christ's behalf.”

That One for whom we are serving as ambassadors, the One that you and I are representing here in this unbelieving world that is foreign to Him – that One is the Christ, who is God Himself. If we are to represent Him as an ambassador should, we need to know all we can about Him – and that means going to the one place in which He reveals Himself to us – in His Word. It means carefully studying what that Word says about Him. Know His name. You may have seen the poster that has on it all the names of God (or even just of Jesus?) in the Bible. But don't stop there, learn what His names mean, and how they describe what our Lord is like.

What Christ means (this is name in text) – what Redeemer means – what Jesus means.

So yes - to be an ambassador, you need to KNOW the one who is sending you.

- 2) you also need to know what His message is. Paul leaves no mistake about this either – “as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.”

God's message is one in which He pleads through us, one filled with imploring, heart-felt calling to one's side – “be reconciled.” God's message has to do with reconciliation – as we had in the reading a moment ago – that “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them.” To reconcile means nothing more than to “settle differences,” to “reestablish a close relationship between two parties.”

And as God's record reveals, the two parties that needed to be reconciled were God and mankind. There had been enmity between the two ever since Adam and Eve because of sin – and God made it possible for that hatred to be removed by His Son stepping into human history to do what mankind could not do – to live a perfect life, to die and rise again the third day. That is the way God's plan of reconciliation was carried out.

THAT is the message that we need to KNOW, and that needs to be spoken – by us, who are

“ambassadors for Christ.”

3) We need to know our target audience. And for this I need to have you look at the wording of verse 20 in your bulletin – it says “we implore YOU on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.” So this also would seem to be straightforward – those to whom we need to speak the message are “YOU.” And when you look at the context, you realize that the YOU here are the ones to whom Paul is writing the letter – to the believers at Corinth. So it would appear that our message of RECONCILIATION is to go out to those who are believers now.

However – based on the Greek, I can tell you that is not what Paul intended. In the Greek, there is no pronoun YOU – in any manuscript. What I found in my edition of the NKJV is that the word YOU is in italics – which means it is added to make sense in English.

I would suggest to you that Paul did not intend there to be a YOU in this sentence – it is not needed to make sense! We are simple to “implore on Christ’s behalf – be reconciled to God.”

Who are we to implore? Not “you” who are believers – you already HAVE that reconciliation! No – the message of restored friendship between God and mankind needs to get out to the same target audience of which Jesus spoke – “Go in to ALL THE WORLD and preach the Gospel to every creature.” “Go and make disciples OF ALL NATIONS.”

As ambassadors of Christ, we need to KNOW that our target audience is ALL who do not already know Jesus Christ, ALL who are not yet believers in Him.

Typically, that is as far as things would go. Being an ambassador is KNOWING – in our case, as ambassadors of Christ, we need to know our Lord, know His message, and know our target audience.

That is it for your typical ambassador – he/she is simply a mouthpiece, a messenger, an announcer. The ambassador represents. The idea is that when the ambassador speaks, the target audience sees and hears the one who sent the ambassador – who that ambassador is himself is of no consequence – how tall, type of voice, complexion, personality – those things are not to play into nor have an effect on the message itself, nor the person being represented.

And yes – to look at it one way, that is true of us as ambassadors of Christ. We are “not preaching ourselves,” as Paul wrote, “but Christ crucified.” We as messengers have done nothing. We are not the ones who have done the reconciling, the saving – our Lord has – and so HE is the One that we need to be representing.

But while that is true – there is more, as the Apostle Paul writes here. We are not just your “average” ambassador!

v. 21 “For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

Being an Advent Ambassador, an ambassador for Christ, does not only mean KNOWING the Lord, KNOWING His message, KNOWING our target audience – it also involves SHOWING that our Lord’s message applies to US ambassadors, too!

You and I were once by nature part of that unbelieving world which is now our target audience! Who the Lord is and what He has done was once announced to us in the Gospel through the Word and Sacraments!

We are not just uninvolved, unaffected, impartial announcers – we have personally experienced
>> the JOY of being reconciled to God

>> the RELIEF of having a Lord who forgives us when we come to Him confessing our sins, repenting of our evil ways, looking to Him for strength to improve our sinful lives

>> the PEACE that comes with having our sins washed away

>> the BLESSEDNESS that comes with growing in our trust in Him from one day to the next!

Being Advent Ambassadors, means that

- you know the Lord
- know His Word
- know your audience.

And as we go about TELLING others of the Good News of the Savior, may the Lord help each of us to experience and share the joy that WE have personally in being reconciled to our Lord in Jesus Christ! Amen.