

TOGETHER

Rediscovering Reconciliation

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Hymn O God, our help in ages past
 (StF 132, H&P 358, SOF 415)

Prayer | Litany of Reconciliation from Coventry Cathedral

For the hatred which divides nation from nation, race from race, class from class, Father, forgive.

For the covetous desires of people and nations to possess what is not their own, Father, forgive.

For the greed which exploits the work of human hands and lays waste the earth, Father, forgive.

For our envy of the welfare and happiness of others, Father, forgive.

For our indifference to the plight of the imprisoned, the homeless, the refugee, Father, forgive.

For the lust which dishonours the bodies of men, women and children, Father, forgive.

For the pride which leads us to trust in ourselves and not in God, Father, forgive.

May the God of love and peace
 forgive us and free us from our sins,
 heal and strengthen us by his Spirit,
 and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord.
 Amen. Thanks be to God.

An act of Remembrance at home

We will remember them,
 not to glorify war
 but to remember the cost of war,
 We will remember them,
 not to celebrate nations
 but to recall the human sacrifice,
 We will remember them,
 the lives cut short in generations past
 and in our time
 We will remember them.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
 Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
 At the going down of the sun and in the morning
 We will remember them.
 We will remember them.

Two minutes silence

Ever-living God,
 we remember those whom you have
 gathered from the storm of war
 into the peace of your presence;
 may that same peace calm our fears,
 bring justice to all peoples

and establish harmony among the nations,
 through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Grant us peace,
 bring justice to all peoples
 and establish harmony
 amongst all nations and races,
 through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

Reading Romans 5:6-11
Luke 15:11-24

Hymn Come, let us sing of a wonderful love
 (StF 443, H&P 691, SOF 72)

Sermon

It is no coincidence that on a day when in churches and communities up and down the country they have been recommitting themselves to work for peace and reconciliation that we should be exploring reconciliation in our services today. So what is reconciliation? And what about reconciliation is it so important to rediscover?

Reconciliation is about making a mend, it is about rebuilding what is broken, it is about working to restore something that has been destroyed. Reconciliation involves both individuals but it also can involve communities, cities, nations. Reconciliation is about restoring the balance or creating a new relationship. It is about enemies becoming friends.

In our reading from Paul's letter to the church in Rome, he is urging the church to take seriously the fact that God has reconciled us through the death of Jesus. Paul talks about us being God's enemies but Jesus reconciling us that we may be called friends of God, and more than friends – sons and daughters! We were called enemies because we had created such a great rift between us and God, that we were behaving like God did not exist. Or worse, we were fighting against God! But through Jesus we have received reconciliation! I think that for us to rediscover reconciliation, for us to really appreciate the difference that Jesus makes then we also need to rediscover repentance.

Repentance is not something that is necessarily spoken about that much, but it is something at heart of what it means to be a Christian. For at the heart of repentance is recognising that we have done something wrong, turning from it and saying sorry, and then receiving forgiveness. And in the receiving of forgiveness then there is the healing and the restoration required which is such an important part of reconciliation.

Without recognising how far we have strayed that we were God's enemies then we cannot appreciate the reconciliation that we have received. We see that in our reading from Luke, the much loved, and well known story of the prodigal son. The younger son hurts his father wishing that he was dead as he asks for his inheritance early. And then he goes off has a wild time and hits rock bottom. He comes to his senses, he knows that he has messed up his life he knows that he needs to say sorry, and he knows that he needs to change direction. He says: "I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants." So he starts his journey home, not expecting anything but to become a hired hand. In the distance, waiting, he discovers his father who runs to meet him. The son says sorry, treat me like your hired hand and what does the father do? He restores him as his son, not a servant.

What an amazing picture of forgiveness and reconciliation; the son, is welcomed, the relationship is restored. And that is what Jesus does for us. That is what Jesus has done for us if we have come to that moment. For when we truly say sorry, when we repent of all the wrong things that we have done then God comes to us and through Jesus Christ forgives us and reconciles us.

Reconciliation is that meeting point when it is possible to begin again. Have we taken our reconciliation for granted? Do we even recognise that Jesus restores the broken relationship between us and God.

Saying sorry, repenting is not just a one off thing but a daily thing. We constantly miss the target for what God would have us do, and for what God would have us be.

But there is a way back, there is always a way back. Nothing is beyond God's love, no-one is beyond God's grace. Every time we share in Communion we remember the reconciling love of God revealed for us on the cross, as Jesus bridged the chasm between us and God and made it possible for the relationship to be restored.

Do you need to rediscover what reconciliation means? Do you need to rediscover what it means to repent? As a church what do we need to repent of what is creating the stumbling block between and God?

We all need to reply on God's grace and mercy, we all need to repent that we may know deep in our hearts the joy of reconciliation, of sins forgiven, of a relationship restored.

Earlier as our prayer of confession we used the litany of reconciliation from Coventry Cathedral, it was a corporate confession, we now take the opportunity

in the light of all that we have heard this evening to consider where we are, what we need to repent of; the stumbling blocks we have created to make our personal confession.

Make time to bring to God those things that create a barrier.

There is now no condemnation
for those who live in union with Christ Jesus;
for the law of the Spirit of life
has set us free from the law of sin and death.
In the name of Jesus Christ you are forgiven.
Amen. Thanks be to God.

Hymn Abide with me, fast falls the eventide
(StF 141, H&P 665, SOF 2)

Prayer for others

God of reconciliation where there is conflict,
bring reconciliation and peace.
Between nations and races,
where there is oppression and abuse of power:
bring reconciliation and peace.

God of reconciliation
In places of work,
when conditions are governed by profit
and the humanity of employees is ignored:
bring reconciliation and peace.
In local communities,
where neighbours cannot agree;
where rights are not respected:
bring reconciliation and peace.
Between people of different faiths,
different approaches to faith,
different traditions:
bring reconciliation and peace.

God of reconciliation
Within our church,
within our families,
within our home:
bring reconciliation and peace.

Reconciling God,
may we honour one another,
see your image in our neighbour,
and always work for justice, mercy and peace.
We pray in the name of the Prince of Peace.
Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray, saying:

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn Make me a channel of your peace
(StF 707, H&P 776, SOF 381)

Blessing

God grant to the living grace,
to the departed rest,
to the Church, and all people,
unity, peace and concord,
and to us and all God's servants,
life everlasting. Amen.