



# DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

## Third Sunday in Lent (A) – Romans 5:1-11

Focus: *Reconciled to God*

### word of life

**“For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.”** (Romans 5:10-11 NRSV)

Read Romans 5:1-11

In his letter to the Romans, the Apostle Paul addresses the relationship between God and humanity—before Christ. This pre-Christ relationship has been described as hostile, a chasm, and a continual state of alienation. Because of sin, we as human beings don't live as God intended and are insistent on living on our own terms. Fortunately, God acted through Jesus and intervened, providing a bridge across the chasm.

1. *How would you describe the relationship between God and humanity—before Christ?*
2. *Hostility is a strong word to describe this relationship between God and humankind. Is it an accurate description? Explain your answer.*

In the first four chapters of Romans, the Apostle Paul focuses on God's actions in Jesus Christ to bring humanity into relationship with God. He uses legal language of being justified before God through our faith. But it is never about us; rather, it is about God who is gracious and full of mercy – one who extends a love beyond words towards humanity. Yet, Paul attempts to do the impossible— to find the words to articulate God's actions in Christ as well as our appropriate response of faith.

It is in the fifth chapter of his letter to the Romans that Paul shifts his attention from the gift of grace extended by God in Christ Jesus to the results of God's actions. He answers the basic question: “So what?” Take a moment and reflect on your answers to the following questions:

3. *What are the implications and consequences for our lives that Jesus Christ died?*
4. *How has the sacrifice of Jesus brought you closer to God?*

The first consequence is significant. Paul writes, “Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand...” (Romans 5:1 NRSV) Peace with God leads to a certain hope of sharing with God for eternity. That deep hope allows us to endure suffering, and suffering builds our character which strengthens our hope. It is a circle which overflows with “God's love [which] has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.” (Romans 5:5 NRSV)

God did not act on our behalf when all was good, nor did God act as a response to our actions. We did nothing to earn God's actions in Christ Jesus. Instead, God intervened while we were enemies of God and estranged from God.

Now that God has reconciled with humanity through Christ, we are no longer on sinking ground. Instead God has extended a bridge between God and us. It is a done deal. We are already reconciled through the cross of Christ. That makes all the difference in how we live our lives.

5. *What does it say about God who acts with grace towards us despite our response toward God?*
6. *What does the word “reconcile” mean to you?*
7. *Does that word “reconciliation” aptly describe your relationship with God in Christ? Explain.*

## **Word among us**

AJ and BJ were twin brothers who were inseparable as children. They were gifted athletes growing up, and they participated in the same sports. Their parents insisted they only play team sports – football, basketball, and soccer – so they would not have to compete against each other.

After graduation, they stayed in their hometown, getting good jobs and marrying their high school sweethearts. But when they turned 40 years old, something happened. It was nothing big—yet it was big enough to add a strain to their relationship. Eventually, AJ stopped talking with his brother, ceased all correspondence, and refused to attend any family function at which his brother would be present.

BJ tried to meet with AJ to discuss things and to apologize for anything he might have done. His attempts at reconciliation were met with only silence. BJ knew his brother well enough to realize that there was nothing under the sun to be done—until AJ was ready. And so BJ waited and prayed. At times, BJ found himself in tears because his heart was broken. He felt there was nothing he could do to regain his relationship with AJ.

1. *What are possible endings to this story?*
2. *How might BJ have felt as he waited for his brother to extend the olive branch?*
3. *What needs to happen in human relations in order for there to be reconciliation?*

Sometimes we find ourselves in broken relationships with those we love. Reconciliation may not be a possibility because at least one person in the relationship does not want to reconcile. It takes energy to be emotionally involved with those who have severed ties.

4. *Compare this story about AJ and BJ with our relationship with God.*
5. *What is significant about God reaching out to humanity to offer reconciliation?*
6. *What are the limitations of comparing God's grace and reconciliation to our human relationships?*

## **faith practice in daily life**

### **Proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed**

Paul urges us to boast—not about anything we have done, but about God's actions in Jesus Christ. “But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.” (Romans 5:11 NRSV)

Unless we understand ourselves to be at one time estranged from God, it is challenging to grasp the significance of being reconciled with God for all times. With reconciliation comes joy and hope. All is not lost. “Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ...” (Romans 5:1 NRSV) The cross of Christ changes everything.

7. *Artists have tried to depict images of being reconciled with God. What images come to mind?*
8. *What songs and hymns remind you of God's reconciliation with humanity in Christ?*

### **Prayer**

Source of Life, in Christ you have reconciled us to you and given us peace. We thank you for looking upon us with such kindness. Amen

### ***last word***

Each day this week, offer a prayer of thanksgiving about being reconciled to God in Christ.

#### *Daily Faith Practices*

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