

3 R's To Easter

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Date: 29 March 2024

[0 : 00] Good morning. Greetings in the name of the Savior who came to die for us. Today we celebrate Good Friday.

As I was studying this throughout the week, I was thinking, is it a Good Friday? Today, 2,000 years ago, Christ was crucified.

It's the reason that we celebrate, but was it good? Is it worth celebrating? And we have two different ways that we can look at it.

We can look at it in the flesh or in the spirit. And so I put down some examples for each just to show the difference.

And so if we think about what happened today some 2,000 years ago, if we think about it in the flesh, we'll remember things like Christ being falsely accused, mocked, slapped, beaten, and spit upon.

[1 : 18] He was scourged. He was made to carry His own cross. And He was hung on that same cross as an innocent man. He was dying. He was thirsty.

And they offered Him sour wine and vinegar to drink. And He suffered a cruel death of suffocation on that cross. Now these are all things recorded in Scripture.

It is good to remember them, to know the cost. And yet these are things on the outward that we look at, things in the flesh.

Now if we look at it in the spirit, we see the Savior taking our sin upon Himself, bearing them on our behalf.

We see Him taking the punishment, the stripes that we deserved. We see Him carrying and hanging on a cross that was rightfully ours, dying in our place.

[2 : 26] We were guilty. We deserve to die. And yet our Savior graciously stepped in and took our place so that we might live.

So we see then that when we are in the spirit, Good Friday is definitely good. And so as we've come together this morning in remembrance, let us remember what it cost our Lord to buy us back, to bring us back into a restored relationship with God.

So at the close of our service this morning, we want to reflect on the Lord Jesus' sacrifice as we partake of the bread and the cup in communion.

So this morning in the message that I've prepared, I want to focus on what Christ did for us, how He was central to God's salvation plan, as our text lays it out.

And so the text, it focuses on three aspects of the plan of salvation, represented by three words. And I want to look at those three words this morning.

[3 : 52] Now not all three words are written in the text, but they come out. And so those words are regeneration, reconciliation, and responsibility.

And so accordingly I've titled my message, The Three R's to Easter. Before we continue, let's just again bow in a word of prayer.

Heavenly Father, we come before you again this morning. Lord, we are thankful for today. And Lord, as we reflect on what you did for us some 2,000 years ago, Lord, there is thankfulness and rejoicing in our heart that you came as that sacrificial lamb and that you died on that cross in our place.

We deserve to be there, and yet you graciously interceded for us. We thank you for that. Lord, we thank you for your word this morning. Lord, I pray that you would grant me wisdom and strength to bring forward your message this morning.

And may your spirit just freely move among us this morning. Lord, I also just want to bring before you Bill and Lynn Jansen, friends here, Lord, and their daughter Jamie.

[5 : 24] Lord, as Jamie is in the hospital, just having had a surgery and still in great suffering and great pain, Lord, we just pray that you would be with them, comfort and give strength, and just help Jamie to endure and to be healed.

Lord, we just pray your hand upon them this morning as well. In Jesus' name, amen. All right, so the first word, regeneration.

What does that word mean? Regeneration is the act of producing anew. And so a couple of examples that I thought of, something maybe even more so in recent years, something more familiar, you know, forest fires.

When a forest burns down, as it regrows after the fire, that is regeneration. Another one, maybe more familiar to those who have maybe lived in Mexico or grown up there or further south, lizards.

If your tail is cut off or a leg or something, they will grow a new one. It is regeneration. And something that we North Americans would be more familiar with, animals with antlers or deer and elk and moose and so on.

[6 : 58] Every year, they drop their antlers and regrow a new set. Also, regeneration. And so even in those examples, we see then that the old must go.

It must be done away with for the new to come forth, for there to be regeneration. And so our text also speaks of regeneration, and not in part as some of these examples were, but as a whole.

Looking again to verses 16 and 17. Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new. So just a bit of a background here.

As after Paul had written 1 Corinthians, the letter to the Corinthian church, the first one, there were false teachers that rose up and made accusations against Paul and dug his name through the mud.

[8 : 17] And the Corinthians were beginning to believe these lies that were being spread. And so Paul sent Titus to Corinth to deal with this issue. And Titus was successful.

He was able to clear up these falsehoods and to restore the people's trust in Paul. And so in response, Paul wrote 2 Corinthians, a letter of thanksgiving to the people for their repentance.

And he also takes opportunity within the letter to defend his character and his apostleship. And so this is what he's touching into here in verse 16.

And again, the first part of it, therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. This is what the people were doing in Corinth regarding Paul.

So he starts, therefore, so because of what? Why do we regard no one according to the flesh? We back up to verse 15 to clarify that.

- [9 : 33] And speaking of Christ, it says, So we have Christ, he died for all.
That is for all mankind, for all who would come to him. Continuing on, that those who live, and he's speaking now to those who accepted, or who accept his free gift of salvation.
And they should live no longer for themselves, but for him who died for them and rose again. So those who live, who have tasted salvation, who are regenerated, no longer focus on themselves.
That is to focus on the things of the flesh. But rather, their focus now is on Christ Jesus, him who died for them and rose again.
And so therefore, from now on, we, those who live, who believe in Christ Jesus as their personal Savior, we regard no one according to the flesh.
- [10 : 51] So what does that look like? How do we regard someone according to the flesh? It's when we judge someone according to the physical, or we make physical comparisons about them.
We are regarding them according to the flesh. And so, we are in a fleshly or a carnal mindset in so doing. And, I just figured I'd bring out some of the more common examples that we find in Scripture of such.
You know, things like Jew or Greek or Gentile, bond or free, rich or poor, learned or unlearned. These are physical classifications of others according to the flesh.
And so, while we were yet unbelievers in our pre-Christian existence, this way of regarding others was normal.
But now, when we are in the faith, it is to be no more. Paul even went as far as to say that those who had known Jesus in the flesh, had known Jesus as a man, they didn't know Him that way any longer.
- [12 : 17] You know, the things that they knew about Jesus as a man didn't matter anymore. Many knew what He was like, who He was.
We have reference in Scripture, is not this the carpenter's son? It is according to the flesh, regarding Him according to the flesh.
But they did not know what He was. He was the Messiah, the Savior. If they had regarded according to the Spirit, this would have been evident.
And yet, they did it according to the flesh. So now though, since we have been regenerated or made anew, we walk in a newness of life.
In Christ, we are a new creation. We are to have a changed mindset, to think differently than we used to. Let's turn to Titus chapter 3.
- [13 : 24] Titus 3. Titus 3. Titus 3. Titus 3. Titus 3. Titus 3.
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of our God and Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.
So verse 3, kind of a reminder of how we would regard one another in the flesh. Who we were in the flesh and how we would regard others.
- [14 : 34] But now in Christ, in his shed blood. Sorry, I'm jumping ahead here. We who were formerly in the flesh this is who we were in verse 3.
How we regarded others. Now God our Savior who is Christ Jesus in love and through his mercy has saved us, he has regenerated us given us the Holy Spirit.

Also, Ephesians chapter 2. Ephesians 2, 11 through 13.

Therefore, remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision made in the flesh by hands, that at the time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

But now, in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. So it begins again with how we regard one another according to the flesh.

[16 : 05] We're called uncircumcision. We're aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. But now, in Christ, by his shed blood, we have been brought near.

We've been made anew, regenerated. We are a new creation. We have hope. We are near to God. Going back to our text.

Again, looking at verse 17. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new.

In Christ, we are a new creation. The old things have passed away.

That is, our old way of thinking, our old practices, our old man has died with Christ on the cross. He is no longer.

[17 : 16] He has been done away with. He has been done away with. This doesn't, it happens there when we come to the faith, but it is also a process.

The changing of our thinking, of our practices. We all know that it is a process. It isn't instantaneous. It does take some time, but the process starts there.

So all things have become new. We have been regenerated, made anew. And the key there is Christ.

Christ is the key to regeneration. He died for all, that all those who would believe in Him would rise up in newness of life, living for Christ and not for self.

Without Christ coming into this world and offering Himself as the ultimate sacrifice, we would still be lost in the old things. Without Christ Jesus bearing our sins on the cross of Calvary, taking on the punishment that we deserved, we would still be wandering without purpose in this lost, dark world.

[18 : 43] Behold, behold, behold, the spotless lamb hanging on that cross, rising victoriously from the grave, offering the washing of regeneration to all who would believe on Him.

Our second word, reconciliation. Verses 18 and 19.

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.

reconciliation. Verse 17 tells us that for those who are in Christ, all things have become new.

And now, in verse 18, tells us where all things come from. It says they are of God. And so it is totally clear with whom the plan of salvation originated.

[20 : 06] God is the author. This newness that we walk in now, this changed mindset, it is from God.

It says, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ. Here we have reconciliation.

We have been brought back into a right standing with God. The definition of reconciliation to be brought back, to be brought back, for things to be made right.

We are brought back into that right relationship with God. And at the center of this again, is Jesus Christ. We are reconciled to God through our faith in Jesus.

So this reconciliation, it happened at the very same moment that we were regenerated. When we put our faith in Christ, Jesus as our personal Savior from sin, we received that washing of regeneration and reconciliation with God, both at the same time.

[21 : 33] We received the second birth, which leads to life everlasting. And the relationship with God that was destroyed with Adam's fall is fully restored to us.

And we can freely again commune with our God. And so what happened to bring about this reconciliation?

Did we do anything to help make this happen? So in order to answer these questions, I need to bring in a little bit of my third point, responsibility.

I need to bring a little bit of that in to answer these questions. God has given us a ministry, it tells us in verse 18. The ministry of reconciliation.

What is the ministry of reconciliation? Well, verse 19 tells us what it is.

[22 : 41] It says, 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.

God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. Not imputing or charging to the account of, the definition of imputing, but not imputing their trespasses to them.

And so we have here part of the Trinity, the Godhead, is validated here. God was in Christ. Jesus came as a man, fully human, while fully being the Son of God.

God was in Him, working through Him. God is Christ. Christ is God. So what did Christ come to do?

To reconcile the world, all of mankind, with God. Not to charge their trespasses or their sins to them. Christ tells us what He came to do.

[24 : 02] And if we turn to Luke chapter 4, we can read that. Luke chapter 4, verse 18.

18 and 19. Here, Jesus reads Isaiah in the synagogue. He reads a prophecy of Isaiah.

It says, He reads this prophecy and it plainly lays out what He came to do.

And then, verse 21. And He began to say to them, Today, this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing. Jesus concludes by just as plainly telling His audience that today, this scripture is fulfilled.

He's saying, I am the one Isaiah prophesied of. I am the one God has sent to bring salvation to this world.

[25 : 43] God initiated the work of reconciliation. We did nothing. While we were in our lost condition, did any one of us ever stop and think how great it would be to have a relationship with God.

Maybe I should do something to restore that relationship. I can safely, pretty positive, I can safely say that none of us did that while we were in our lost condition.

It's the farthest thing from our mind. While the world stumbled around in its lost condition, God set in motion the plan that would reunite the world with Him on His part.

He needs do nothing more to reconcile. On His end, all things have been made right. And He waits now.

He waits only for mankind to do His part, to put His faith in the Savior who came and died for Him and rose again on the third day, conquering death that those who believe on Him should have everlasting life as well and a relationship with the Father reconciled.

[27 : 08] and moving on to the third R, third word, responsibility.

God has done His part, then comes our responsibility. responsibility. If we look back to the last part of verse 18, it overlaps there a bit.

It says that, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. God has given us a ministry. We are His agents and He has committed to us a task, a responsibility.

That ministry is the ministry of reconciliation. We are to share the aspect of reconciliation with the lost.

How God was in Christ restoring a right relationship for them with Himself. and that though their sins are many, God is not charging these trespasses to their account if they but receive Christ as their Savior.

[28 : 38] Then all wrongs are righted. They are remembered no more. And so, verse 20. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ as though God were pleading through us.

We implore you on Christ's behalf to be reconciled to God. This is what the ministry looks like. We are God's ambassadors or we could say spokespersons or messengers.

God's ambassadors for Christ. What does it look like to be an ambassador for Christ or to be a spokesperson for the Lord?

And what came to my mind is the Old Testament priests. With that, let's turn to Malachi chapter 2.

Going back to the Old Testament in Malachi chapter 2. Verse 7.

[29 : 50] For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge and people should seek the law from his mouth for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.

The priest was a messenger of the Lord. And as such, he should have knowledge of the word of God and he should be sharing these truths with the people.

The people would come seeking the truth from God and from the law, from his law. They would come seek that from the priests. The priests are the ones that the people would go to to hear from God.

And so maybe we would say, well, we're not priests so this doesn't fall on us. Let's turn to 1 Peter.

1 Peter chapter 2 and verse 9.

[31 : 06] Verse 9. But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, his own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Peter is writing here to those earlier on in chapter 2. He's writing to those who are as living stones, those who are building on the chief cornerstone.

And so that is to say believers. He's writing to the believers. And this is what he writes to them in verse 9. You are a royal priesthood.

You have a ministry to proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. We are to tell others of Christ and what he has done for us, how he has regenerated us and reconciled us to the Father.

So, back to our text. So, as we go about being ambassadors for Christ, it is as though God were pleading through us.

[32 : 36] We are God's mouthpiece. we implore or we beseech or we beg you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

Now, as we reveal to unbelievers their lost condition to them, we reveal that to them and why they have a need of a Savior, should the question arise, why do we need to be reconciled to God?

Should that question arise, we have verse 21, for he made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

God sent his only son who did not know sin, nor did he ever sin while he walked on this earth, to be sin for us.

God made his son to be sin in our stead. Christ didn't become a sinner, he became sin, he was made sin.

[33 : 58] He bore the wrath of God against sin in our place. God that wrath should have come down upon us and it would have destroyed us.

And yet in the face of such destruction, Christ stepped in and interceded for us. He took our place, suffering the punishment that we deserved, dying in our place.

He paid the ultimate price for our sins. Why did the Lord do this?

That we might become the righteousness of God in Him. In Christ, through His shed blood, we can stand righteous before a just and holy God, washed white as snow, our sins blotted out to be remembered no more.

This is the love our Savior had for us that caused Him to willingly be nailed to the cruel cross in our place, to die for us, to rise again on the third day, victorious over death, offering salvation, regeneration, and reconciliation to anyone who would only believe.

[35 : 38] Praise God for each and every soul that has taken God at His word and has accepted that free gift of salvation. Let us now also remember what God has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

We have been regenerated and reconciled. For all that Christ has done for us, let us remember our responsibility to share the good news of salvation with those who still need to hear it.

that concludes the message for this morning. We'll close this part of the service in prayer before we move on to the communion portion of the service.

And after the prayer, we'll give time to dismiss the children that would like to go downstairs. There will be youth there who will be looking after the children. And then following the communion, we'll have the worship team come up in a closing song, and then we'll be dismissed.

So let us bow. Heavenly Father, again, we come before you. We are humbled, we are thankful for what you have done for us, how you have laid out a plan of salvation.

[37 : 21] You carried that plan out by sending your son into this world as an innocent baby to grow up like we do, to experience what we do, and to die like we do.

And in dying, he did so much more. He took our sin upon us, or upon himself. He bore that weight upon his shoulders, nailing our sins to that cross.

And from there he was taken down and laid in a tomb. And yet, Lord, as we celebrate in a few days, we know that he rose from that grave in newness of life, having victory over death, and that in him we can be washed clean, regenerated, and reconciled back to you.

Lord, we thank you that this has happened the world over in so many hearts already. And yet, Lord, there are so many more hearts where this needs to happen.

And so, Lord, give us the courage and the strength to step out in faith and to boldly proclaim your message, the ministry of reconciliation.

[38 : 54] Help us to share that with those around us that we come into contact with. Lord, we just again praise and thank you for what your Son has come and done for us.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.