

24<sup>th</sup> March 2019, 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Lent, HC St Faith's Sermon Series,  
The Call to Reconciliation,  
Isaiah 55:1-9, 1 Corinthians 10:1-13, Luke 13:1-9

May I speak in the name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

The subject we have been given for today's sermon and discussion afterwards is: The Call to Reconciliation.

Reconciliation: Have you been thinking about it?

You will understand, or hope at least, that I have.

It is becoming clear to me that it is the key to: peace, a good life, the survival of our planet and our race.

I am becoming convinced it is of the utmost importance.

However, I am also coming to a fuller realisation of how very difficult it is.

To my mind there are three main aspects of reconciliation to consider. They are:

Being reconciled to self.

Being reconciled to God.

Being reconciled to everyone else.

Before we can get anywhere with this important subject we need to realise we are being called to act.

As Individuals, we have to wake up to the reality that each one of us, has a responsibility given us by God to be agents for reconciliation.

From St Matthew's Gospel:

A lawyer asked Jesus 'Teacher which commandment in the law is the greatest'.

Jesus answered: 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment.'

Importantly Jesus went on to add:

'And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.'  
(Matthew 22:38).

St John in his Gospel has Jesus giving the disciples a new commandment:

'that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.'

By our common humanity we are called to care for others and increasingly it becomes obvious to me, for all of God's creation.

God is calling us to lives of consideration, love and empathy for others. And as the world seems to shrink with ever increasing and far reaching communication our neighbours come to include everyone.

We, the body Christ, are tasked to further the Kingdom of God so that the reality of God's rule embraces more and more people.

So reconciliation is all about relationships. Whether one to one, or group to group, or nation to nation

But it has to start between individuals.

Good habits, as well as bad habits start in the nuclear family.

We learn as youngsters from our parents.

As we grow in maturity, we hopefully come to a dawning realisation that we need to become friends with ourselves.

To love ourselves as well as forgiving ourselves for not being perfect, for not being the saint we thought we were going to be.

As Richard Rohr puts it using Franciscan imagery:

Until you have leapt across the chasm and embraced the leper.

Until you have recognised that really the leper is not on the other side of the chasm but the leper is, first of all the leper within you. Until you acknowledge that, you won't really know your passion, or be capable of compassion.

Everything of course for us should be on the foundation of reconciliation with God.

The Anglican Franciscan Third Order has this as one of its aims:

'To spread the spirit of love and harmony.'

And one of its principles is this:

'The Third Order sets out, in the name of Christ, to break down barriers between people and to seek equality for all. Members are pledged to fight against the ignorance, pride, and prejudice that breed injustice or partiality of any kind.'

That's not a bad starting point to try and become more aware of our calling to reconciliation and what it may mean.

All this may be fine until we really stop to think what it entails, and realise, perhaps slowly, our part in hindering reconciliation, perhaps in minor but nevertheless important ways.

This year's archbishop's Lent book lists at least nine ways that can be an impediment the author calls them:

Exclusion, othering, passing the blame, prejudice and stereotyping, wealth greed and conflict, being silent when we have to speak and act, rushing to judgement, revenge after reconciliation.

If we had a pause here for some honest personal thought, how would we all rate?

But these are the sorts of things God calls us to keep in mind as we endeavour to live lives that reconcile rather than create, or further conflict, or misunderstanding.

These are important issues in all areas of life: home and family, work, church, indeed in all our dealings and interaction with other people.

Rohr again:

'The work of God is total and full reconciliation. In other words, our only real badness consists in the repression of our goodness'.

There again is our call to reconciliation.

I would like to make a suggestion that we all go home and have a think about how we have ignored that call by our behaviour, by our attitudes and reactions to others.

And when it comes to the Peace it could be an act to further reconciliation by passing it with someone you don't normally manage to get to.

AMEN