

# “We Are God’s Ambassadors”

2 Corinthians 5:16-21, Luke 15:11-32

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Alex Stevenson says. The Kingdom of God is like a Prince who comes upon a man sick and dying. Taking pity on the man the Prince orders his servants to pick him up. Then he orders his physicians to care for the man and nurse him back to health. When the man is healthy the prince orders that proper robes be made for him. The prince learns that the man has no family so he adopts him and makes him his heir. Discovering that the man is uneducated the prince orders the royal teachers to train him to read and write. Finally, realizing he is without employment, the Prince makes him an ambassador for his court.

One day this "pauper made royal ambassador" was traveling about fulfilling his duty of representing his Lord. And he came upon a man in a condition similar to his own previous condition: naked, hungry, homeless, and friendless. After taking a good look at the man he realized that he knew him. This man had been one of his acquaintances in his previous life. They had shared their sorrow and helplessness as they suffered.

At first this acquaintance did not recognize the ambassador as his friend. When he finally did he exclaimed, "But you are a different man, how did this happen? When I knew you, you were weak and frail, now you are strong and powerful! Before you had no hope, now your life is so hopeful. What did you do to accomplish this transformation?" The Ambassador explained to his old friend, "I didn't do it! The Prince my Lord nursed me back to health and made me what I am. I am a different man, but it is not my own doing. Left on my own I would be where you are, but the Prince made me his royal Ambassador." Then the ambassador did for the dying man what his Lord had done for him."

We are ambassadors for God charged to bring the ministry of reconciliation to all people. The Apostle Paul wrote. **2 Corinthians 5:16-21 (NLT)** “**So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know Jesus now! This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to Godself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to God. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Godself, no longer counting people’s sins against them. And Jesus gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. So we are Christ’s ambassadors; God is making God’s appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, “Come back to God!” For God**

**made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.”**

God is reconciling each of us to Godself through Jesus. God has appointed us ambassadors to proclaim and perform the ministry of reconciliation. As our relationship with God deepens we become more and more aware of God’s grace, mercy, forgiveness and renewal. We become more aware of God’s desire to bring all people into a good, loving, harmonious relationship with each other and God.

Communication is never accurately or fully understood. Even the best communication between two people still leaves gaps, missed points and misunderstandings. One of the key jobs of an ambassador is to continually clarify the intent and desires of the person they are representing.

As God’s ambassadors, each of us has a huge ministry to communicate. God is misunderstood by a lot of people. Many view God as distant, judging and excluding. Do you believe God gets good PR in the media? Do you believe God’s desires are accurately proclaimed by other Christians? Your job, as God’s ambassador is to proclaim your experiences of God and what you believe God’s desires are for the world.

The Apostle Paul believed that the core of our message should be God’s wonderful message of reconciliation. We are loved, forgiven of all of our sins and made a new person not by anything we do rather all by grace, a free gift from God. Paul said. **2 Corinthians 5:17-19 “Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to Godself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to God. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Godself, no longer counting people’s sins against them. And Jesus gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation.”**

In Christ, as ambassadors, we take on a new reason for living, a new purpose in life, a new attitude towards other people. Our patience, service, love, compassion and forgiveness are to be an incarnation, an embodiment of Jesus, to all who are hurting from misunderstanding.

**2 Corinthians 5:17b “The old life is gone; a new life has begun!”** This is great news in regard to all our sins, mistakes, guilt and baggage, that are all gone. By God’s grace we start each moment fresh, the beginning of a new life.

In terms of reconciliation this is very, very hard. The old life is gone. We are to let go of anything that hinders relationships. Gone is to be resentment, grudges, hurts, revenge, and the pain someone caused you, so the relationship can be fresh and begin again. If a relationship is damaged we are to wipe the slate clean. Give up old demarcations, old labels, old divisions, and old pecking orders. A new relationship is beginning. This is so difficult that I believe that it to only happens by God’s grace. Without an awareness of how much God has forgiven us it is extremely difficult to forgive. Without God I believe we are incapable of true reconciliation. Jesus placed so

much importance on reconciliation, upon us forgiving each other, that Jesus put it in the Lord's Prayer. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who have sinned against us. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who have trespassed against us. Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

Jesus told a parable about reconciliation. **Luke 15:11b-32 (NLT)** **“A man had two sons. The younger son told his father, ‘I want my share of your estate now before you die.’ So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons. “A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living. About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve. He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and the man sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. The young man became so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the pigs looked good to him. But no one gave him anything. “When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, ‘At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! I will go home to my father and say, “Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant.”” “So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. His son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.’ “But his father said to the servants, ‘Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.’ So the party began. “Meanwhile, the older son was in the fields working. When he returned home, he heard music and dancing in the house, and he asked one of the servants what was going on. ‘Your brother is back,’ he was told, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf. We are celebrating because of his safe return.’ “The older brother was angry and wouldn’t go in. His father came out and begged him, but he replied, ‘All these years I’ve slaved for you and never once refused to do a single thing you told me to. And in all that time you never gave me even one young goat for a feast with my friends. Yet when this son of yours comes back after squandering your money on prostitutes, you celebrate by killing the fattened calf!’ “His father said to him, ‘Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me, and**

**everything I have is yours. We had to celebrate this happy day. For your brother was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!”**

It is a very comforting parable when we view ourselves as the young son with the father as God running to forgive us of our every mistake. It is comforting to know no matter how great of a sin, or much we sin, how defiant, rude, angry and insulting to God we become God will still run to us, embrace us and be filled with joy by our presence. God's love is unconditional. God embraces the sinner before they even repent.

It is a very comforting parable when we view ourselves as the older son with the father as God pleading with us to join the celebration. The older son is every bit as lost as his brother. The older son's sin is as great. His work, obedience and devotion was fake. It was not out of love for his father rather to earn a reward from his father; therefore he bitterly resents his brother. The older son believed in work's righteousness, he judged others by how hard they worked, by what they gave and what they did. He was frugal believing the fatted calf should be saved instead of being generous. He was stoic not wanting to join a joyful celebration. He wanted to be in control and to enforce his view of justice. Perhaps saddest of all; he was unaware of the love his father lavished on him daily and the joy his father enjoyed from them being together all those years.

The compassion, grace and forgiveness of the father extends to both sons a reflection of Jesus ministry to reconcile all people to each other and to the world. Here is where this parable gets really challenging. It is a reflection of our ministry as ambassadors to reconcile all people to each other and to God. The Apostle Paul wants us to put on the sandals of the Father, to be the one who is gracious, compassionate and forgiving. We are to be bold, extreme and extravagant in our forgiveness and reconciliation. The old life puts conditions on forgiveness, wants to keep score and is limited by human perceptions of forgiveness. The new life offers unconditional forgiveness, realizes God's forgiveness knows no boundaries and somehow knows that God's forgiveness goes way beyond our human concept of how to forgive offenders.

As God's ambassadors we are to be filled with compassion so eager to forgive that we never give up on any relationship always looking for an opportunity to forgive. We are to be so eager to forgive that we are not concerned with our dignity or honor. We are not to wait for the person who hurt us to come to us rather we are to run to them with forgiveness. We are not to wait for them to say I am sorry, or I repent, or I won't do it again, rather we are to run to them and forgive them. We are not to withhold our forgiveness until they do or say anything or put any conditions on our forgiveness. Our forgiveness is not to be dependent on them listening to us explain how we were hurt. The number of offense against us should have no bearing, for our forgiveness is to be infinite. Our forgiveness should not even start with the words "I forgive you" rather with a warm embrace. Our reconciliation is to be so great that we are lavish with our love and gifts.

Our reconciliation should be like the sunrise disperses the darkness. The old life is gone. A new life has begun in which we celebrate together, live, serve and love together.

As God's ambassadors we are to plead with any two people, or any two groups, at odds with each other to let go of their differences, reconcile and celebrate that each of them is loved by God. It could be between friends, in a family, a marriage, enemies, countries at war, different religions fighting, democrats and republicans. As God's ambassadors we are to plead with them to let go of all division and hurt for the old life is gone. We are to remind them that all of us are siblings, all loved, forgiven and welcomed by God. We are to celebrate together and then go forward in the new life that is beginning living in harmony with each other.

A woman was out for a jog with her friend. They decide to stop and call for a pizza to be delivered when they arrived home. Approaching the pay phone a homeless family asked for spare change. The woman opened her pack, held out all her money and said. "Take what you need." The homeless family overjoyed took all of it. A few seconds later the woman remembered she needed change for the phone call. She said to the homeless family. "Pardon me I want to make a call can you spare some change." The homeless family held out all of the money and said. "Take what you need."

We are all homeless, prodigals and beggars, so head home expecting nothing. Be astonished when God runs out to you and brings you to a feast, a celebration, a home with everything you need in abundance and God says. "Here, take what you need." As God's ambassadors we are to say to each other, "Here, take what you need." Amen