

Go! – Missions
Session 2 – Evangelizing
2 Corinthians 5:16-21



Introduction

One of the primary missions of the church is to evangelize, meaning to share our faith in both word and deed. There is a lot out there on evangelism, but we're going to engage it from a slightly different direction. At its roots, our call to evangelize is part of a call to God's ministry of reconciliation where we work to reconcile the world to God. In this lesson we will talk about what God's mission in the world is, and how we are a part of it.

READ 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Discussion Questions:

- *How does Paul describe the "mission" of God in this passage?*
- *Who/what is included in the word, "world," used in verse 18? (pro-tip: it is the word "cosmos")*
- *What is God's plan to accomplish this mission?*

Evangelizing

The word "evangelizing" comes from the word, "evangélion," in Greek. It is the same word we translate as "gospel," or "good news." To evangelize, then, is most basically to share God's good news with the world.

ASK – *What is this good news?* (Gather answers from the group.)

According to Paul in this letter, an important part of this good news is that God is reconciling the world to himself. That was the purpose and task of Jesus in the world. Evangelism is rooted in sharing the good news of what God is doing.

Evangelism is two-fold:

- 1) We **proclaim** that God's mission is to reconcile the world to himself. Re-read the passage from 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 that elaborates on this point.

This is God's plan. Humanity sinned and broke its relationships with God, and creation itself has been "groaning in labor pains" while it waits for the revelation of God. God does not just have good news for humanity. God has good news for all of creation. This good news is that God is calling all of creation back to himself. We evangelize by proclaiming the good news of God's reconciliation.

- 2) We also are sent out to reconcile the world to God. We don't just proclaim God's reconciliation. **We take part in it.** We work to make it possible. This is also part of God's ministry of reconciliation.

Evangelism is two-fold: God reconciles the world to himself AND God sends us out to reconcile the world to God.

Discussion Questions:

- *What is our task in God's mission to reconcile the world to himself?*
- *In verse 20, Paul uses the image of an "ambassador" to explain our role in God's mission. What would you want to see in an ambassador from the United States to another country?*
- *Working off of this, what does God want to see in his ambassadors to the world?*

God has good news for all of creation. The good news is that God is making everything right. The world is broken by sin and because of that, the world is far away from God. The good news is that God is reconciling the world back to himself.

Reconciliation—What It Is, What It Isn't:

When we are sent out to evangelize, we are working to bring creation back to God with our words and deeds. We do this because God is reconciling all things to himself. The simple implication of this is that, as we are drawn closer to God, we are also drawn closer to one another. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul says, "Now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace: in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us." (2:13-14) God has created a new unity, by the blood of Christ, in the midst of this world's disunity.

This unity in Christ is surprisingly easy to neglect. Are you more closely aligned to fellow believers in China or non-believers at home? Do you feel more comfortable with non-believers in the same political party as you, or with believers who vote and believe differently? In short, what is your deepest loyalty?

Reconciliation to God does not expect that we will all vote the same. It does not mean we will all look the same. What it means is that, as fellow believers in Christ, we have been brought near to God, so we have been brought near to each other. This is Christ's family reunion. He wrote the guest list. We don't take names off of it.

Discussion Questions:

- *Have you ever had an experience worshipping God with someone very different than you? How did it feel?*
- *Why are there people who believe in Jesus that we might struggle to worship with?*

This unity in Christ does not mean, however, that reconciliation is toleration. Read the following verses:

- Colossians 3:5-7
- 1 Corinthians 5:12

A fundamental truth of the Christian faith is that the world is dead in sin, and is saved through Jesus Christ. There are ways we live that cause death. There are things we do that work against God's mission of reconciling the world. Our job as the church is to judge ourselves. It is not our concern to judge the world—God will do that. We work to put to death whatever in our own lives gets in the way of being ambassadors of God's good news. Toleration suggests that you can do whatever you want, and I'll do whatever I want.

ASK - *Why is this a problem?*

While we do not seek to disrespect others who believe differently than we do or seek to disrespect those with different faiths and religious backgrounds, we do want to hold on to the fact that we believe that salvation comes through Jesus Christ. In the end, toleration allows you to continue doing whatever you want, while I do whatever I want. **Reconciliation, on the other hand, suggests that we ALL do what God wants.**

Discussion Questions:

- *How might toleration get in the way of reconciliation?*
- *Are there other times where toleration would be important to proclaiming the gospel?*

God's mission of reconciliation is the ministry to which we have been called. We received it from others before us, and we have become ambassadors to the world. Our job is to share the good news with others.

Conclusion:

What is evangelism? Proclaiming the Good News.

What is the Good News? God is reconciling the world to Himself.

How is God reconciling the world to Himself?

- 1) Through Jesus Christ and 2) Through us as His ambassadors.

PRAYER: Lord God, we remember your children whom we may not like. We remember that they are still your children, saved by Jesus Christ. Send your Spirit upon us that we may be your ambassadors to the world, especially in how we love those we struggle to like. Reconcile us to Yourself. In Christ's name, Amen.