## Reconciliation

In book keeping

The Greek word translated as “reconciliation” literally means “change” or “exchange,” referring to a change in the status of a relationship. For example, reconciliation might involve exchanging hostility for friendliness, resentment for goodwill, hatred for love.

Things we reconcile and often don’t even realise what we are doing

* Theology vs the science of Evolution
* The universe as quite small, created by design and unchanging to one expansive changing constantly with known processes changing the world and the cosmos
* Biblical scholarship and archaeology
* Murder and capital punishment or war
* Assimilation of migrants – one view is that they should assimilate (or be absorbed) as quickly as possible. The other is ‘let them do their thing’ and we will value their contribution.
* We reconcile 3 parts of the Godhead into one. In 2005 a song submitted to the UCA National Assembly on the theme of multiculturism had the refrain

We celebrate the difference,in union with the Son,And by (the) Holy Spirit,Are blended into one.
(Linda Sutton)

Holding 2 things in our mind at the same time- sometimes with opposite ethics, facts brought forward to prove,

A bringing together

Harmony or being at peace- can be socially in our relationships as a nation, community or personally.

We use the word reconciliation often now in relation to Aboriginal people and other people in Australia.

The story of the OT – The covenant - I will be your God and you will be my people. Reconcile, at peace with each other.

**– let’s get back to that Jesus story**Jesus would point out the reason for the ritualistic behaviour to put it into perspective. The Sabbath was made for man. Wouldn’t you pull your donkey out of a well on a Sabbath?
Some rituals eg the Passover and the Sabbath were designed not for their own sake but to point to God and his saving grace. They were there to help remember. In today’s passage. For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what defile a person; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile them.”

Hebrew people in the OT had tried to reconcile Yahweh, the One God with the local Canaanite/Phoenician gods- just in case let’s also worship the ‘strong man’ gods like Baal, the agricultural gods and the feminine, fertility gods like Astarte. prophets were always reminding people of ‘true worship’ and being at peace with worshipping one God. How does this relate to our secular ‘worship’ today. What things or ideas do we worship today.

Back to the readings and the theme of reconciliation.

In the Matthew reading the woman that Jesus meets -on her turf, in her country, is multiply despised and rejected.

* A woman,
* from a group that worships other Gods,
* in and from a country that has, historically, invaded Israel (even stealing and then losing the Ark of the Covenant).

The disciples are quick to point out her low and despised status to get rid of her. Jesus even replies that his mission of salvation is not directed at these people. “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.”

But, amazingly, after her entreaties, Jesus seems to, almost instantly (in this recording by Matthew) change his mind and recognise the faith of the Canaanite woman and heal her daughter.

Originally the anecdote innocently portrays Jesus expressing a racist stance only to abandon it when put under pressure. The abandonment of prejudice, the crossing of the traditional boundary, is the good news of the story and why it was told. It is hard not to draw the conclusion that Jesus, himself, had to make a transition, had to learn. His response was more typical of the rather conservative Judaism of the time.
Throwing out some questions to you-

* Is it embarrassing that **Jesus was human**, too?
* **Does it make the gospel any less valid** if the historical Jesus also had to struggle to come to terms with the negative in his upbringing? At least this is the assumption of the anecdote.

To me the point of the story is not the change of mind. You might argue that Jesus did not change his mind but wanted it to look that way. The point is the redeeming of the relationship. The story’s redeeming feature is the redeeming. It is a story of reconciliation. Jesus and his followers are at peace with the relationship with this previously despised person, a woman, regarded as unclean by her non-acceptance of the Jewish ritualistic cleansing behaviour but also the lesson is of reconciliation with a neighbouring country. If only we could see this acceptance and respect between modern Jews and Arab and other Palestinian neighbours.

As we pointed out 2 weeks ago the feeding of the 4,000 follows this story in which there were 7 baskets collected. No longer a symbol of 12 tribes of Israel as in the feeding of the 5,000 but probably symbolic of the 7 Canaanite tribes that the Hebrew people attempted to annihilate - Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you. Deut 7:1

The story starts with discrimination and quickly turns to acceptance and reconciliation.

I must be a reconciliation fan. Some of my favourite movies are about reconciliation. The Journey. Michael McGinnis of Sin Fein and Rev Ian Paisley travel together before meeting in what was to become the Northern Ireland Good Friday agreement.

Last night in the movie Trumbo. Dalton Trumbo And he acknowledged that the McCarthy era, with its communist witch hunts, damaged all concerned, explaining, 'None of us – right, left, or centre – emerged from that long nightmare without sin." He said there were no winners, only losers and that he didn’t come to give the speech to the writers Guild to blame or hurt. This is despite the fact that he had spent 11 months in jail because he wouldn’t denounce communists before a Senate committee and then about 10 years blacklisted as a scriptwriter for Hollywood.

Other movies. Red Sun and Mandela – based on the Truth and Reconciliation happening in the 1990’s post-apartheid South Africa.

Amish Grace – A school shooting in a tiny Amish church and the forgiveness and support offered by the church community to the killer’s family

**Reconciliation in Prison** a story from Phillip Yancey

On a trip to South Africa, I met a remarkable woman named Joanna. She is of mixed race, part black and part white, a category known there as “Coloured.” As a student she agitated for change in apartheid and then saw the miracle that no one had predicted, the peaceful dismantling of that evil system. Afterward, for many hours she sat with her husband and watched live broadcasts of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings. Instead of simply exulting in her newfound freedoms, Joanna next decided to tackle the most violent prison in South Africa, a prison where Nelson Mandela had spent several years.

Tattoo-covered gang members controlled the prison, strictly enforcing a rule that required new members to earn their admittance to the gang by assaulting undesirable prisoners. Prison authorities looked the other way, letting these “animals” beat and even kill each other. Alone, this attractive young woman started going each day into the bowels of that prison. She brought a simple message of forgiveness and reconciliation, trying to put into practice on a smaller scale what Mandela and Bishop Tutu were trying to effect in the nation as a whole. She organized small groups, taught trust games, got the prisoners to open up about the details of their horrific childhoods.

The year before she began her visits, the prison had recorded 279 acts of violence; the next year there were two. Joanna’s results were so impressive that the BBC sent a camera crew from London to produce two one-hour documentaries on her. I met Joanna and her husband, who has since joined her in the prison work, at a restaurant on the waterfront of Cape Town. Ever the journalist, I pressed her for specifics on what had happened to transform that prison. Her fork stopped on the way to her mouth, she looked up and said, almost without thinking, “Well, of course, Philip, God was already present in the prison. I just had to make him visible.”

It is my view that God loves reconciliation leading to peace.

­­­­­­­­­­­­­The account in Genesis of Joseph’s interaction with his brothers is another turn around. The brothers hadn’t recognised Joseph. Joseph, as a ruler of Egypt, had the power to do whatever he wanted. Options were

* to send them away empty-handed – probably eventually to die of starvation and having to tell their Father, Jacob, the bad news.
* Imprison them without trial- quite popular in Egypt then and even today in many countries.
* Punish with pain and send them back

Instead he reveals himself to his 11 brothers. There were tears all around. This Semitic tribe was saved and the brothers went on to become the 12 tribes crossing coming out of Egypt under Moses, crossing the Sinai Wilderness and then the Jordan River and settling in their own designated lands in Israel.

I’ve told the 2 stories round the wrong way. The Hebrews, 400 years after Joseph’s time, invaded Israel, supposedly drove out the Canaanite tribes and now we are back to Jesus, a couple of thousand years later. Jesus is talking to one of the Canaanites, the group supposed to have been annihilated. And she comes to him for help, is refused, then healing is graciously given.



There are many biblical stories of reconciliation

* Jesus and Peter
* The prodigal son
* Others ?

From Genesis we know that there has been a disruption in the relationship between God and humans.
“It’s your sins that have cut you off from God. Because of your sins, he has turned away and will not listen anymore” (Isaiah 59:2, NLT)

People tried to use rule-based methods to return to a relationship with God. In the end God took the initiative in bringing about reconciliation: “So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God” (Romans 5:11, NLT)

Jesus said on the cross [Luke 23:34](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+23%3A34&version=ESV) ESV “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” And they cast lots to divide his garments.
But reconciliation is more than forgiveness. It’s the start of a new, restored relationship.

This is the message of Good News for the people of Israel—that there is peace with God through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. Acts 10:36
[Romans 5:10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+5%3A10&version=ESV) ESV For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

From beginning to end we see the invitational reconciling work of God. Genesis to Revelation

And so, we come from an example of Jesus, who was a reconciler. He asks his followers, Christians, to do the same. From the Beatitudes in Matthew’s gospel we know that believers are called to be peacemakers ([Matthew 5:9](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+5%3A9&version=NLT)) and to love not just our friends but our enemies and pray for those who persecute us ([Matthew 5:44](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+5%3A44&version=NLT)).
In Colossians 3:12–15, the apostle Paul urged, “clothe yourselves with tender-hearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Make allowance for each other’s faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace” (NLT).