

2 Corinthians 5:14-21

¹⁴For the love of Christ compels us, because we came to this conclusion: One died for all; therefore, all died. ¹⁵And he died for all, so that those who live would no longer live for themselves but for him, who died in their place and was raised again.

¹⁶As a result, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we knew Christ according to the flesh, we no longer know him that way. ¹⁷So then, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. The new has come! ¹⁸And all these things are from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. ¹⁹That is, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them. And he has entrusted to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, inasmuch as God is making an appeal through us. We urge you, on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. ²¹God made him, who did not know sin, to become sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

Ambassadors

I.

I have never had to use one, and probably most of you haven't, either. At least, I *hope* you haven't had to use one. Still, even though I have never used one, it's always nice to know they are there, should I ever *need* one.

I'm talking about the U.S. Embassies you can find throughout the world. Contrary to popular belief, diplomatic missions like embassies are *not* part of the sovereign territory of the country of the embassy. International law protects the embassy and prevents it from being destroyed or entered or searched without the permission of the embassy's government. If you are a citizen of the United States, and make it to the U.S. Embassy in a host country, usually you are safe there. I know people who *have* had to use an embassy; *they* know *exactly* how important the U.S. Embassy can be when you are in a foreign land.

Every embassy has an ambassador. Ambassadors are the representatives of their own governments. Ambassadors of the United States are to represent the interests of the United States and the President to the host country. They are also to protect citizens of their own country in the host country. At times they work toward peace, negotiating terms between the host country and their own country and leader.

Usually something has gone wrong on your trip abroad if you are seeking out the embassy. Perhaps you have lost your passport and need it replaced in order to return home. You might have had some legal trouble in the country you are visiting and need assistance in clearing things up to get home. The embassy staff is there to help you.

II.

"We are ambassadors for Christ, inasmuch as God is making an appeal through us" (2 Corinthians 5:20, EHV). The Apostle Paul identifies himself and his fellow ministers of the gospel as ambassadors—not for some earthly nation-state, but for Christ. He, and every minister of the gospel with him, are there to help people as ambassadors for Christ.

Life in this world is like traveling abroad. Last week Paul talked about it as living in a tent. Tent-life has a temporary quality about it. When you view things as if you were living in a temporary situation in a tent, you are able to put everything into context. Two weeks ago Paul listed all the tragedies and travesties of life as "momentary, light troubles." Even though he could list a myriad of bad things that had happened in his life, those things were

nothing compared to the glory of heaven Paul was waiting for. Christ's ambassadors want other people to look forward with the same joy to the glories of heaven that are still to come.

In the meantime, while we remain in the tent city of this world, we have some issues—some momentary, light troubles to deal with. We have seen in past weeks that *all* those momentary, light troubles are due to sin. It may be that the sin of other people affects *you* in some way. At times you simply have to deal with the overall problem of sin in the world; because Adam and Eve listened to the whisperings of Satan, picked the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and ate, sin entered the world. God said that he would add the issues of life to the world to remind us that the once-perfect world has been tainted by sin. Thorns, thistles, pain in childbirth, disease, natural disasters—these things are all additions to the world to remind us that *this* life is to be treated like living in a tent.

Sooner or later, however, your momentary, light troubles are because of your *own* sin and its consequences. Paul says to the Romans: “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23, EHV). Some of those sins we think of as small. You lie to your parents and claim to have cleaned your room as you were told, but you didn't. You gossip a little bit about one of your friends. Other sins we think of as big, like when someone commits a murder and is sent to prison.

Jesus says: “So then, be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48, EHV). To God, *none* of them are small. He expects and requires absolute perfection. To God, every infraction of his commandments requires severe consequences. “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23, EHV), and that death is separation from God for eternity.

III.

It is this very issue that is the underlying reason for existence for every minister of the gospel—every ambassador for Christ. Paul says: “For the love of Christ compels us, because we came to this conclusion: One died for all; therefore, all died.¹⁵ And he died for all, so that those who live would no longer live for themselves but for him, who died in their place and was raised again” (2 Corinthians 5:14-15, EHV). Yes, the wages of sin is death, but “One died for all; therefore all died.” Because of Jesus, no one has to be sentenced to death. *His* death counts for *your* death. As far as God the Father is concerned, you have already died to pay your required sentence.

“So then, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. The new has come!¹⁸ And all these things are from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:17-18, EHV). Those who are “in Christ” are reconciled to God. To reconcile means to restore to friendship or harmony. Being reconciled to God means, then, that the effects of sin have been removed. You're not in heaven...yet, but you when you are “in Christ” you enjoy the protection of the embassy. Jesus is the embassy.

“God...reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.¹⁹ That is, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them. And he has entrusted to us the message of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18-19, EHV).

Payment has been made. The debt has been paid. Christ is the One who died for all, which meant that in God's eyes all died. In Christ, God was reconciling—restoring harmony with—the world to himself.

This message is monumental. Everyone needs to hear it so they can be brought in to the embassy—brought in to Jesus. “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, inasmuch as God is making an appeal through us. We urge you, on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:20, EHV).

Your pastors and teachers are ambassadors for Christ. Through us, God is making an appeal to bring you in to the embassy.

Today is a special day. We are honoring a woman who has served as an ambassador for Christ for 25 years—Lynn Sellnow. I have been privileged to be a witness to over half of that ministry here at Holy Trinity. Many of you have known and seen Lynn’s ministry in action for longer than that. The precious little lambs she sees are tenderly and loving led through the gates of the embassy to the feet of Christ to see that what he has done for all, he has done for them.

She makes the same appeal to them that Paul does to everyone: “be reconciled to God.” Christ has already accomplished it. “God made him, who did not know sin, to become sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:21, EHV). Jesus didn’t have any sin. He was the only One who ever lived who was able to follow God’s directive to “Be perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect.” (See Mt 5:48 above). Yet God placed on him the sins of the whole world—the sins of every man, woman, and child who has ever lived or ever *will* live. So many sins were placed on Jesus that he became sin personified—Jesus is the One identified as sin itself.

It was the stain of sin that sentenced Jesus to death on the cross. It was the stain of sin that caused God to abandon him, and for Jesus to cry out from the cross: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46, EHV). Jesus willingly became sin personified “so that we might become the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:21, EHV).

The Apostle Paul, Lynn Sellnow, and every Called Worker want you to know what Jesus has done for you. We want you to be reconciled to God in Christ Jesus. We want you, along with ourselves, to “become the righteousness of God” through faith in Jesus.

IV.

Embassies usually can be found in the capital city of a country. If the country is large, there are consulates in other cities which serve the same function as the embassy for helping citizens in a foreign land. Lynn has been serving our little consulate at Holy Trinity for quite some time. We give thanks to God for the many little lambs who have been led to the Savior’s side because of her tireless efforts as an ambassador for Christ.

We pray today that the Lord of the harvest would continue to use her efforts to continue this ministry of reconciliation, spreading the message of the Lord Jesus for years to come.

As for those who are not full-time workers in the embassy of Christ’s church, we pray that you would also serve as ambassadors for Christ in whatever vocation you find yourself in. Your prayers for Lynn and other ministers of the gospel, your offerings to continue the ministry of the embassy of Christ at this place and throughout the world, and your own personal efforts to share the gospel with others are all part of your own personal ambassadorship.

God bless Holy Trinity. God bless Lynn Sellnow in the years of her ministry to come. God bless all ministers of the gospel. And may God bless *your* work. Amen.