

"A Different Kind of Mediator"

1 Timothy 2:1-6

September 19,2010

17th Sunday After Pentecost

What do you do when two groups have a disagreement and they can't agree or a problem occurs and they can't solve it. Sometimes, you have to call in a MEDIATOR. When two groups – like workers and management – cannot agree and there is a conflict, then a mediator comes. His job is to come into the middle of the two groups to stop the conflict and solve the problem.

A mediator's job is not easy because disagreements can be rough. A good mediator will probably earn lots of money if he is skilled. He has to try to get both sides to compromise. Both sides cannot get all that they want. For example, if it is a job conflict, the workers want more money and management wants more productivity from its workers. Both can't get everything. So a good mediator will help each side give up some in order to reach an agreement.

When the conflict is over and the problem solved, each side gets some of what it wants. Both are happy, but not too excited. Each side is a bit disappointed because they did not get it all. Yet that is considered to be successful mediation – if each side gets some.

This situation is like the situation which exists between God and people. Our text for today says God "desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." God wants to have a relationship with humanity. He desires to rescue people from this evil world to live with Him in the perfect peace and joy of heaven. He wants that for ALL people.

However, there is conflict. God and people are at odds with one another. This is called SIN. We often think that sin is just doing bad things. That's true, but it's not the reason that sin is so bad. Some people think sin is so bad because it hurts people. Lying, cheating, stealing, killing, and so on hurt people. That's true. But even THAT is not the reason sin is so bad. Sin is bad because it destroys our relationship with God. God created us to live in harmony with him. Sin breaks that relationship with God and sends us to hell.

We know that sin has affected everything. We can read about it in the Bible, “All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” We notice sin touching our world – droughts and storms; tornados and hurricanes; floods and earthquakes. And we see sin in ourselves. We may try to ignore it and think it’s not there. But sin causes conflict. We are in conflict with each other because of sin. And, more importantly, we are in conflict with God.

How do we solve this problem? God must punish sin and destroy it. We want forgiveness, salvation, and life. We can try to solve the problem ourselves by trying to improve and live better. But that’s not good for God because we cannot be perfect as God demands. We can let God solve the problem by wiping out sin. But that’s not good for us because it leaves us dead and in hell.

We need a MEDIATOR to help us. Our text says, “For there is one God, and there is one MEDIATOR between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” Some people think Jesus came into this world to teach us about God, to be an example of how to live right, or just to heal the sick, feed the hungry, help the blind to see, help the deaf to hear, and the lame to walk and so on. Those are important jobs. But Jesus came to do something even more important. He is the MEDIATOR to resolve the cosmic conflict between the Lord of the universe and all of humanity.

Regular MEDIATORS force both sides to give up something and only get part of what they want or need. Should God give up some of His holiness, not be so strict, and accept a little sin? He cannot. That is not His nature to do so. Should we give up a little of our lives and spend some time in hell? We cannot do that either. It seems that there is no way to compromise here.

Jesus is a different MEDIATOR who works differently. Our text says, “[He] gave himself as a ransom for all.” God doesn’t have to sacrifice His holiness to stop the problem. We don’t have to sacrifice our lives to do away with the conflict. Jesus offers up Himself - His life to death and His soul to hell – to solve the problem and stop the conflict.

Jesus’ perfect life earns holiness for us in God’s eyes. Jesus’ blood washes away our sins and gains forgiveness for us from God. Because we have Jesus’ holiness and because we have

God's forgiveness, we are saved. Our relationship to God is restored. We have life with Him here and now on this side of the grave and we will have life eternal with Him after the grave in heaven.

Both sides get what all they want. God receives the perfect obedience His Law requires and He is able to pour out His anger and punish sin as it deserves. We get the credit for Jesus' perfect obedience for ourselves and we receive forgiveness for all our sins. How great is that!

This means that we never have to fear an angry God. The conflict is over. We know only a loving Father. We don't have to worry about our needs and desires now – food, clothing, shelter, money, health, and so on. He will provide for us. We don't have to fear death and the grave. The problem of sin, death, and hell is over. Because Jesus rose from the dead, we, too, shall rise from our graves and live forever.

We can live now with confidence and hope. We have a mediator with God – Christ Jesus. We can go to Him in prayer with our needs and desires. God will hear us and answer us. He does this, not because we are such fine people and good pray-ers. He will listen and answer because of our good and fine MEDIATOR Christ Jesus. That's the reason we end each prayer by saying, "through Jesus Christ, our Lord". We are literally going to God through a MEDIATOR, Jesus Christ.

If you work in a union, experienced a labor conflict, and had to use a MEDIATOR, you know things do not always go as smoothly as I said. Labor can want too much. Management can be too stingy. And MEDIATORS can be lousy. But that is not the case here. We have a perfect God. We have a perfect MEDIATOR in Christ Jesus. Therefore, we have a perfect solution to our problem and a perfect ending to our conflict. We give nothing. The Mediator gives up everything. We receive everything God has to offer here and in eternity. That sure is a different kind of mediator. Amen.