





## Divine Reading of Scripture

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Tuesdays at 11 am you are invited to join a small group of folks in a study of Galatians and Matthew. We meet at the parsonage.

Bring your Bible and something to take notes. The goal of the study is compare and contrast Paul's message of the Good News with Jesus' Words as revealed in Matthew's Gospel.

We listen for Jesus' Word to discern God's will. The wise person puts Jesus' Words into action.

We exercise Jesus' words through our vows of prayer, presence, gifts, service, and witness.

We can't change past actions. Changing the way we think and feel about sin, judgement, and death turns peacekeepers into Peacemakers.

## Presence

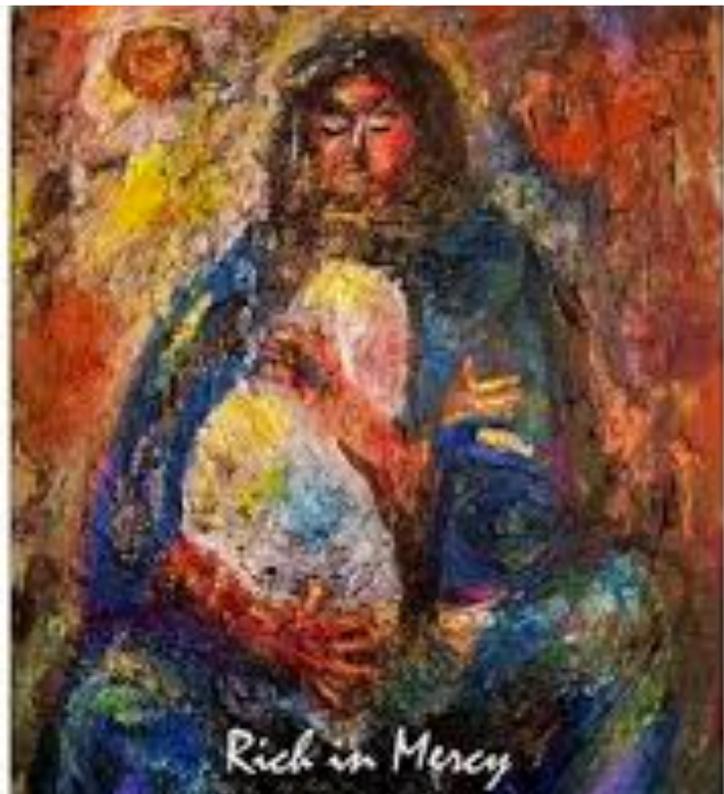
The Holy Spirit leads us to be aware of our temptation and deliver us from evil actions.

We are tempted to change actions. We see an action as good or evil. Notice how your heart and mind love judgement. Actions change when the heart and mind exercise mercy.

## Gifts

Receiving God's gift of mercy changes our hearts and minds. God doesn't count our sins against us, why do we?

Who are the people involved in the action you want to change. These are the people with whom Jesus calls you to practice the Ministry of Reconciliation.



## Service

We serve God by receiving mercy to give mercy. This is Worship in Spirit and Truth.

I contend that forgiveness sets me free from my neighbors power, control, and authority. Serve the Lord. Be merciful as Christ is full of mercy.

## Witness

The Ministry of Reconciliation is our exercise of prayer, presence, gifts, service and witness. It is the daily exercise of doing God's will on earth as it is in heaven.

## Scripture: II Corinthians 5

**11** Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience. **12** We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart. **13** If we are "out of our mind," as some say, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. **14** For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. **15** And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

**16** So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. **17** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:[a] The old has gone, the new is here! **18** All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: **19** that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. **20** We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. **21** God made him who had no sin to be sin[b] for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

## Message

The Ministry of Reconciliation.

When I was a child I saw my bike as a way to play. I couldn't imagine life without a bicycle. It offered me freedom. Today I see my bike as a way to exercise. It spends more time hanging on the wall waiting for me than I get to spend time riding it. I suppose the day will come when I will see my bike as physical therapy.

Notice the bike didn't change. The way I think and feel about the bike changed.

Friends sin is like a bike. It doesn't change. The Good News is that Jesus teaches us exercises designed to change the way to think and feel about sin. This is what Paul calls the Ministry of Reconciliation.

If we are "out of our mind," as some say, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. **14** For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that **one died for all, and therefore all died. 15 And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. 16** So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view.

Please allow me to share why I live in the World, and exercise the spiritual disciplines of prayer, presence, gifts, service, and witness. By living in the World I do my best to be a law abiding citizen, and live a moral life. Yes, I practice both! I keep the Law for a very selfish reason. I do not want to pay fines, spend time in jail, or die from lethal injection. I see government, police, lawyers, and courts playing the vital role of being peacekeepers in the World. They keep peace with either/or judgement, condemnation, and sacrifice. I hope to let them play their role so I may be free to play mine. I contend that morals are culturally acceptable actions. Where the Law is governed by officials. Morals are judged by my neighbors. I know from personal experience that moral failures such as adultery and divorce are self destructive. I do my best to be seen as a moral person but know without a doubt that it doesn't blind God from what is in my mind and heart. This is why Jesus says that murder, an outward action, and anger, the condition of the heart and mind, are liable to the same judgement. Exercising the Spiritual Disciplines of prayer, presence, gifts, service and witness leads me to experience myself and neighbor from Christ's point of view. As Paul says in another place, I live in the world but not of it. This is the practice of both/and thinking and feeling.

**13** Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. **17** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:[a] The old has gone, the new is here! **18** All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: **19** that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, **not counting people's sins against them.** And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

Some of us remember making vows when we joined the Church. By my prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness I will be loyal to the United Methodist Church. How do you see your vows. Do you see them with child like wonder. Do you see them as the way to play with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? Do you see them as the way to exercise your heart, soul, and mind. Have you suffered a death, injury, or separation that needs physical therapy.

Have we printed our vows in the hymnal and Book of Discipline, placed them on a bookshelf and forgotten they are the very exercises Peacemakers practice to spread the message of Reconciliation?

Since God does “not count people’s sin against them, why do we? Simply because we have not learned to do the math of reconciliation God’s Way.

Jesus exercises God’s Ways. The Cross is where sin and mercy make Peace.

Jesus exercises God’s nature. The tomb is where death and Grace make Peace.

Jesus exercises God’s love. Resurrected Life is where the World and Love make Peace.

Indeed it sounds like new math. Like Paul says, many will judge us “out of our minds” for not counting sins against one another.

**20** We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. **21 God made him who had no sin to be sin[b] for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**

The Ministry of Reconciliation is the exercise of transforming our world into the Kingdom of Heaven. The World exercises judgment. Everything is either/or. It is the power of choice. Jesus exercises mercy. Everything is both/and. It is the power of reconciliation.

Prayer: When you Pray the Holy Spirit brings **both** you **and** Jesus into God’s Presence. This is what Paul means when he says, you are One in Christ.

Presence: In God’s Presence we are offered gifts. The gift of mercy changes our hearts and minds. God doesn’t count our sins against us, why do we? We judge actions. God judges our hearts and minds. God judges with mercy. We judge with condemnation and sacrifice. Jesus’s call to deny self means we deny the power of sin, and receive the power of mercy. Both /And means Opposites attract!

Service: We serve God by receiving Christ’s mercy to give mercy. Jesus’ call to take up your cross means to see your neighbors sin and serve them with mercy. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

Witness: The Ministry of Reconciliation is the exercise of prayer, presence, gifts, and witness. The Ministry of Reconciliation is God’s will done on earth as it is in heaven. It is the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus reigns from heaven. We are Christ’s Ambassadors on earth. Ambassadors live in a land not their own offering aliens and strangers Holy sanctuary!

I am blessed to have friends that see the Ministry of Reconciliation as child’s play. I am blessed to have friends who see the Ministry of Reconciliation as exercises that transform their heart and mind. I am blessed to have friends who see the Ministry of Reconciliation as physical therapy that heals their broken heart and troubled mind. I find that some days I am like a child at play. Other days I struggle to find time to practice the exercises. When I

busy my self with the world, politics, and religion I tend up in need of heart and mind therapy.

How do you see it? What do you need?

One in Christ,

Robert

## Tithes and Offerings

**3** “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, **24** leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

Out tithes and offerings maintain Trinity’s physical presence in Wise County. The Ministry of Reconciliation transforms hearts and minds. God changes people’s hearts and minds. Transformed Hearts and Minds bring the Kingdom of God to life today.

## Benediction

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.