

Minister's Message – June 2014

Enemies

Visiting Japan for the first time I thought about my father coming to this country after Japan surrendered to the Allied forces in 1945. Our two nations had been locked in bitter conflict for five years. I had come to visit a fellow Christian; we did not speak about those days.

But at the morning devotion in a small agricultural training centre a young woman spoke philosophically about being enemies. She began by saying she did not believe in Jesus but clearly admired the teaching of Jesus. She was concerned about all the hatred in the world, not just that reflected in wars.

Everywhere one looks there is hatred. Marriages that start out with love can be consumed by hatred. There can be hatred between parent and child. We can have enemies in the home, in the workplace, and in the community. How do you get on with your neighbour? This lady was part of a community that worked, studied, ate and slept together. Maybe she had enemies within this community. She was disturbed at all the hatred in the world and frustrated that there seemed to be no answer.

As I listened my mind turned to the Bible where we do find the answer to this problem. But first we must understand the cause of the problem. Why is there so much hatred and animosity in the world? It has been in the world since the time of Adam. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command, God said to the serpent or Satan, 'I will put enmity between you and the woman' (Genesis 3:15). He put these first humans out of the Garden of Eden. One of their sons proceeded to kill his brother.

So all human beings became enemies of God because of sin. The lady speaker may have ridiculed this idea, and you may ridicule it also, but in the Bible it is written that, 'we were all once alienated from God and enemies in our minds by wicked works' (Colossians 1:21). God hates sin and sinners hate God. In hating God we hate people made in his image. We hate those who are different from us, those who hurt us, or sometimes hate for no particular reason. Being enemies of God we are by nature given to having human enemies.

The good news and answer to this sad and tragic situation is that while we were enemies with God, God acted to reconcile us to himself. 'We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ' (Romans 5:1). 'God demonstrates his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us' (Romans 5:8). In his amazing grace God has reconciled us to himself. He had made us his friends. Do you believe this? Are you reconciled to God in Jesus Christ?

The outcome of this act of God, and of you believing what he has done in Christ, is that we are reconciled to one another in Christ. 'If anyone is in Christ they are a new creation: the old has gone and the new has come' (II Corinthians 5:17). Holding grudges and having enemies becomes a thing of the past when you know the love of God in Jesus Christ.

He who hates his brother walks in darkness. He who walks in the light of Jesus Christ loves his brother (I John 2:9-11). 'When a man walks to please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him' (Proverbs 16:7). I should write and tell the lady this good news; but at least you now know the good news of Jesus!

Rev. Dr. Dennis K. Muldoon