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The Second Corinthians Imperative

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I have experienced a rollercoaster of emotions the past several months. A broken heart. Anger. Holy outrage. Gratitude. Despair. And more often than I ever would have expected, hope. I suspect you, too, have had many different feelings as you have grieved people who have died from COVID-19, worried about your future in a decimated economy, watched the murder of George Floyd, had the outcry for justice stir your heart, and mourned the division in our nation.

Feeling these emotions – sometimes contradictory, often confusing and occasionally out of control – is just part and parcel of being a human being. But God calls us to transcend how we feel and live the Jesus’ way. Not because we follow a list of “shoulds and musts,” or are overwhelmed by guilt. But because something happens to us when we accept Christ as our Savior and our Lord. Paul puts it like this in 2 Corinthians 5,

6 *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: The old has gone, the new is here!* (NIV)

This does not mean we are suddenly perfect like angels or robots (your choice!). It means we have begun to see things differently, understand things differently, process things differently and act differently than we otherwise would because our relationship with Jesus has taken hold of us. Of course, at least for me, the progress is far slower than I want to admit. But it’s real. And to use Paul’s wording, it calls me to live as Christ’s ambassador.

As Christ’s ambassador, I am called to do God’s work, not work for my preferences. This means I am called to help people be reconciled to God through a relationship with Christ. And let me tell you, I can only do this by venturing out of a beautiful sanctuary and loving those who struggle the most in life. It also means I am called to help people be reconciled to each other. And I can only do this when I work for justice for those who are the victims of racism, help those who live in poverty and share hope with those who have been abused.

Yes, reconciliation is hard work. It comes at a price. But this should not surprise anyone. After all, this is exactly what God did when he willingly sent his only son, Jesus, to die on our behalf in order to reconcile us with himself – not because we deserved it, but because this is how much God loves us.

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