

Christmas a Time to Forgive

by Basilea Schlink

This sermon emphasizes the importance of reconciliation, love, and forgiveness during Christmas, highlighting the power of God's love to transform hearts and relationships. It shares the story of the evangelical sisterhood of Mary in Canaan, Germany, and their journey towards reconciliation through repentance and love. The sermon encourages listeners to seek reconciliation with God and others, reminding them of the joy and blessings that come from forgiveness and love.

Scripture: John 3:16, Jeremiah 31:3, Matthew 5:44, 1 John 4:7, Luke 6:37, Romans 5:8, Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 3:13, 1 Peter 4:8

Topics: "Reconciliation", "Power of Forgiveness"

Description

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Transcript

Christmas, a time to rejoice, a time when sad and troubled hearts are to be refreshed. We all long to celebrate in an atmosphere of peace, love, and joy, yet in many homes there is strife and tension at Christmas. The evil one seems to do his best to erect barriers between us and those close to us.

Instead of love, there is bitterness and alienation. Is it possible to live in reconciliation at all? Here at Canaan, Germany, are people of various nationalities who have experienced a foretaste of heaven as they seek to give God first place in their hearts and to live in reconciliation with one another. They are the evangelical sisterhood of Mary.

What is the secret of their joy? It has to do with Christmas and a gift they have received. Mother Basilea, the founder of the sisterhood, would like to share with us about it. What is the greatest gift that God can grant us? Himself, His nature, which is love.

He does not want to keep this love for Himself. He wants it to be ours, too. That is why He sent Jesus, love manifest in the flesh, who brought this love to earth in order to redeem us to love.

Let us draw love from this fountain of grace, His heart, and then we will have the greatest happiness for time and eternity. Love. Nothing can make us so happy as loving.

Songs of praise and worship are sung around the manger, celebrating the glorious truth. For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. Jesus, the Son of God, became a little child in order to reconcile us to God.

And so today the Lord, who is eternal love, says to you, I have loved you with an everlasting love. Return to me, for I have redeemed you. In this child we find nothing but love for everyone.

And He loves you, too. Out of love for us, Jesus left His Father and the glory of heaven. Out of love for us, He then walked the path of suffering, even unto death on the cross.

True love, which means reconciliation to God, and then to one another, brings joy into this dark world of ours. And how we need it. Not even a Christmas card.

She really gets on my nerves. And have you heard the latest? No! What have I done now? I don't know. Daddy, come back.

But the divorce has already gone through. Bitterness and hatred are rampant today. Always seeing the other person's fault instead of our own blocks reconciliation.

This is what destroys relationships between people, denominations, nations, and races. This is what separates us from God. This is what causes terrorism, war, and all the resulting misery.

Oh, loving little Lord Jesus. How we need you in these times when love is growing cold everywhere. You are nothing but love.

When we sense our lack of love, we can come and receive it from you. When they have nothing of us, they only come their way. The empty country gives us a thrill with love away.

How did this ray of divine love from the manger come to be shared with Aborigines in the far north of Australia? It's a long and moving story beginning in another country half a century ago. A story of sin and guilt and of divine wrath over an entire nation. Over Germany.

Because of the Holocaust. The Lord filled our Founder Mothers with repentance and moved them to humble themselves because of our national crime against God's chosen people, the Jews. This led to a wonderful outpouring of His forgiveness and grace.

The experience of His forgiveness kindles a deep love for Jesus who forgives sin and the joy that no one in this world could ever give. This love then flows over to others, especially those whom we have wronged, like the Jews, against whom our German people sinned so grievously. Sorrow over this sin kindled the passionate cry in Mother Basilea's heart.

How can we heal the wounds that we have inflicted? How, if it is at all possible, can we make amends? Mother Basilea wrote a book, *Israel, My Chosen People*, and a play entitled *Israel*, both of which helped to change the attitude of many Christians in Germany towards Israel. There was a new move of the Spirit, a movement of repentance. True love will always result in action.

For Holocaust survivors, a home was opened in Jerusalem, a place where wounds would be healed and hearts would learn again to trust in God. At the dedication, the mayor of Jerusalem at that time said, We want to forget everything else little by little and just see the reconciliation and the love that you have brought to us. Thank you.

And a Jewish author commented, We are in danger of letting the hatred that was directed against us now poison our own hearts too. There is only one weapon against hatred and that is love. A festival of heaven is being celebrated at Canaan with friends from all over the world.

Is it possible to taste heaven on earth in our times? Yes, for the love of God has the power to transform everything. It can change people and circumstances. It brings together people alienated from one another.

This is why Mother Basilea says, Because God is love, we are here to share his love with others. And we find that the closer we are to the loving heart of God, the closer we are to each other. Friends, sisters and brothers all want to live according to the Canaan rule, which says, for instance, Treat others the way you would have them treat you, and you will be blessed by God.

Make the most of this day, it will never return. But that which you put into it in the way of thoughts, prayers and deeds, you will find again in eternity. So take care that you put in much love, faith and prayer, and you will have a rich harvest above.

This love, demonstrated in everyday life, is contagious. No one is too young or too old, too sick or too difficult to practice it himself. Children are reconciled with their parents, who then decide not to get a divorce.

A daughter-in-law is reconciled with her mother-in-law, a teacher with his class, a minister with his church board. Disputing heirs are reconciled, and neighbors with each other. Whole neighborhoods are transformed as a result.

A bishop from India prayed, Let Canaan's spirit of reconciliation spread from land to land and reach the ends of the earth. Over the years, Canaan branches have been opened throughout the world. Mother Basilea traveled to the branches.

In Australia, she was invited to speak at St. Andrew's Cathedral in Sydney. Lamenting in her heart over the grief of God, she spoke about his commandments of love. The main commandment is, and always will be, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Today we are living at the beginning of the end times, the age when large numbers have fallen away from God and turned their backs on the proclamation of His will, His commandments. It is the age of lawlessness. For the commandments of God, His divine ordinances are being trampled underfoot.

God is lamenting, as He did once long ago through the words of the prophets, in deep grief over His people. Today the love of God is lamenting for us, for our sin, for His children. O hear, hear the Father's sufferings.

O listen to His lament. O hear His great anguish, greater than all our suffering. For never has there been a greater love than His.

This heart which loves us dearly, sacrificing His only Son for us, is so deeply grieved because of our sin today. Yet many disregard this sacrifice. Their response is hatred, bitter hatred.

At the Canaan Centre in Australia, Mother Vasilea shared what was on her heart. Children, we are here to love. And love starts with repentance.

Think of the beginnings here, 200 years ago. The cruelty against the convicts transported here, with one sin leading to the next, up to this very day. The brutality of the whites towards the Aborigines, just the opposite of what God said in His commandments of love.

Oh, go to the Aborigines, and in the love of Jesus, tell them how sorry we are. And so a ray of divine love from the manger came to be shared on Elko Island in the Northern Territory. It's such a joy to be with you, and I thank you so much for inviting me to come and share with you here on Elko.

But I also want to say how sorry I am that you have suffered so much under the hands of us white people. Please forgive us. We're very sorry.

Your sister, we forgive you. But we also ask you to forgive us, because we had a bad feeling towards white people. Thank you.

On Elko Island, a wonderful plan began to take shape. Well, we had a good time with the visitors from Canaan, didn't we? I could really sense that God's love was joining your hearts together with the Mary sisters, is that right? No. I really like to go to Germany and see Canaan with my own eye.

True. Then maybe we could organize a group of us to go together. How about we go to Israel at the same time to see the land where Jesus was born, lived, and died? We needed a lot of money for such a trip, but God helped us.

Some of us sold fish and crabs. Some people made baskets, beads, and paintings. Our families gave us lots of help and encouragement.

They said, this trip is not just for you, it's for all of us. Arrival in the Holy Land, the scene of Jesus' birth and sufferings. O Jesus, thank you for bearing a cross for me.

I want to love you with all my heart forever. Amen. Meanwhile, at Canaan in Germany, preparations were being made for the special visit.

As we drove through the gates of Canaan, we could feel the presence of the Lord and His goodness and love. We sat around the campfire just like back at home. We quickly got to know the sisters and brothers and many visitors from other countries.

This is what touched me most, the unity we had together because of God's love. It was a moving scene when the Aborigines greeted us whites around the campfire, telling us that they loved us. Now we can love one another.

In Jesus' name I come to you. In Him we're sisters and brothers. Now we can love one another.

The festival of heaven on the last evening was like a foretaste of the day when people of every land and color will worship at the throne of God, united in love. There, praise and honor and glory will be offered to Jesus, the King of heaven, for reconciling us to God and to one another. It is not a matter of course.

We don't take it for granted. And therefore I thank you so much. Many, many thanks that you have come to us.

In heaven, Jesus has books. In the books, everything is written down what we have sacrificed, believed or repented in life to Jesus. For our tears of repentance, He remembers that too.

Or when we had to believe, when it was hard to keep faith and believe. Everything He remembers. Jesus remembers all your suffering and He has taken it in His heart.

And He has suffered with each one of you who suffers. And He says when you come to heaven, you will be rewarded. Because suffering will be turned into glory.

Lord of creation and Lord of my life, Lord of the land and the sea, Lord of the heavens before the first time, Lord of all those you will be. King of all things you will be. Sie ehren Gott.

You honor God. Und er freut sich an Ihnen. And He is happy over you.

Er freut sich, dass er seine Aborigines hat. He is so happy that he has his Aborigines. Da ist Freude im Himmel über Sie alle hier.

And there is joy in heaven about you all. Sie haben uns reich beschenkt. You have made us rich, blessed us very much.

And then the festival closed with a glimpse of the heavenly glory. Our God is in heaven. Hallelujah.

We love you, love you very much. Hallelujah. Send your angels then.

Send your angels then. Hallelujah. This reconciliation was very real.

Do you too need to be reconciled? This Christmas, God is offering you an opportunity. With all your heart, forgive those who do you wrong. For blessed are they who forgive.

They shall be forgiven. Go to Him against whom you have some sin in your heart. Or He against you.

Be reconciled. Then you will reap the love of God, both here and in eternity. May you have a very blessed Christmas.

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