

On reconciliation by Desmond Tutu
Extract from *Allies of God* (1981)

My friends, that is what God has accomplished in Jesus Christ, and it is this in which we are given a share – this ministry of reconciliation. The church must be the forgiving fellowship of the forgiven’ it must be the reconciling Koinonia of the reconciled. In this way it is the first fruits of the kingdom and becomes a verbum visibile, a kind of audiovisual aid for the sake of the world. It shows what human society should be as God intended it to be.

Some might think that reconciliation is a soft or easy option. But look at what it cost God. True reconciliation does not mean crying, “Peace, peace’ where there is no peace.” No, true reconciliation occurs when we confront people with the demands of the gospel of Jesus Christ for justice and peace and compassion and caring. It means taking sides on behalf of the weak and the downtrodden, the voiceless ones. We cannot be neutral in situations of injustice and oppression and exploitation.

Be careful if you say that you want reconciliation and that you are a minister of reconciliation. Be sure you know what you are about because reconciliation involves suffering and even death. Reconciliation cannot happen apart from the cross. A Christian who does not suffer for the sake of Christ and the sake of the kingdom cannot be a Christian. These are the words of Jesus, “Unless you take up your cross and follow me you cannot be my disciple.” He says that quite categorically. A church that does not suffer for Christ’s sake and the gospel’s cannot be the church of Jesus Christ.

As Christians, we cannot sit about wringing our hands in helplessness. We are not impotent. We can work mightily for justice, peace and reconciliation. After all, we are the instruments of God’s peace. Let us go out in the power of the Holy Spirit to work for God’s justice, God’s peace, God’s love and reconciliation.