



Links Players

Grace as Reconciliation - The Ultimate Mulligan

... if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself.... (2 Corinthians 5:17-19, ESV)

Friends have disagreements. Colleagues have debates. Spouses have spats. Over time, tensions build and the next thing you know former friends, colleagues, and lovers are engaged in verbal fisticuffs.

We all witnessed the brouhaha between Brooks and Bryson. As the media stoked the logs, things heated up. Though they “played nice” for the Ryder Cup, no one expects to see them vacationing together.

Through the years, the sport of golf has certainly seen its share of “dust-ups:” Azinger and Ballesteros had their infamous “spat” during the “War by the Shore.” Phil’s recent actions and accusation indicate “there is trouble in River City.” Notwithstanding his apologies, this recent feud is unresolved.

All these stories are at the human-to-human level. The big question staring us in the face is this, “What happens when you and God have a falling out?”

Among other things, the early narratives in Genesis tell us what is wrong with the world—God and Adam were in a covenant partnership. Adam and Eve broke trust with their Creator. The fallout for this treachery is not restricted to our primal parents.

You and I are “in Adam.” Which teaches us this—you and I are like them. We have Adam’s physical and spiritual genes in our veins (c.f., Romans 5; Acts 17). This is what theologians call “original sin.”

In the story regarding Adam and Eve, we discover something very important about grace. Importantly, we discover a pattern that repeats itself throughout all of scripture.

Strikingly, here and throughout Scripture, God—the one who has been offended—initiates the process of reconciliation. That’s grace!

God comes to them in the cool [Spirit] of the day. Rather than executing capital punishment, he slays animals and clothes our primal parents in bloody skins.

This pattern repeats itself at the first Passover—a lamb is slain, blood is applied, and lives are spared (c.f., Exodus 12). This pattern continues (c.f., Isaiah 53). As Paul confirms, “...Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed.” (1 Corinthians 5:7)

Amazingly, when our rebellion called for the strictest punishment, God the

Father initiated reconciliation by sending his mediator—Jesus the Christ—to effect reconciliation. As Paul reminds us, “...there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” (1 Timothy 2:5).

However, this mediation is strikingly different than human-to-human mediations. In this mediation, there are no negotiations, and the terms are unilaterally decided by the offended party.

First, our Mediator chooses to bear the penalty for our offense. That penalty is death. Second, God requires that we repent for sin and place our faith in him.

We who were once enemies are now reconciled to God by the death of his Son. (c.f., Romans 5: 10)

Prayer – Father, thank you for the gift of second chances.

READING - 1 Timothy 2:5; 2 Corinthians 5: 17-21; Romans 5:1-11

OPENING QUESTIONS: Do you recall other tour players who have had public quarrels? Have you personally had an argument on the course? Have you reconciled?

1. Paul informs us in **1 Timothy 2:5** that Christ is the only mediator between God and men. Why is he the only way? Discuss the significance of this in our present cultural moment; one given over to pluralism.

2. In **2 Corinthians 5:17-21**, Paul explores the truth of reconciliation. Who takes the initiative in reconciling the rift between God and humanity? Why is that striking? What ministry is given to those who are reconciled? Discuss how you are or are not living faithfully in this ministry.

2. List three descriptions/conditions about mankind before Christ redemption in **Romans 5:1-11**. In each case, who takes the initiative? Discuss what that teaches us about grace? Discuss why Jesus had to die to reconcile us?
