

“WHY DID GOD BECOME MAN?”

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Sermon Texts: Isaiah 53:6; Romans 5:1; 8:1-2; II Corinthians 5:19, 21

Belgic Confession: Article 20

Introduction.

We know all too well what most people think about God. Most people today think of God as a God of love. “Smile, God loves you” or “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.”

Most people today think God went through a huge makeover in the NT. In the OT God was a God of justice and judgment and wrath, but in the NT He went through a personality change and is a God of love and mercy. Others say God is just and Jesus is merciful. Either way the God of the Bible ends up looking like a schizophrenic or bi-polar.

To suit our sensitivities we have made God in our image. Our culture exalts love and self-esteem and feel-good religion. We have churches and pastors preaching positive thinking and nice thoughts like Norman Vincent Peale and Robert Schuller and Joel Osteen.

We don't want a God who is a judge, we want a God who is a loving, kind grandparent. We think that a God of justice and mercy is mutually exclusive or contradictory. God can be one or the other but not both.

But we can't be guided by the sentiments of our day, we must be grounded in God's Word. Article 20 of the Belgic Confession focuses on two qualities or characteristics of God, the attributes of justice and mercy.

God is a God of love and justice, mercy and wrath, grace and righteousness. He reveals Himself as Father and Judge, Shepherd and King, Savior and Master.

Why do we insist on and maintain both God's divine justice and divine mercy? To answer that question is to answer the question, why did God become man?

The Justice of God.

Let's begin with the justice of God. People think that judgment and justice and hell are all contradictory to a loving God. They think of justice as negative, something that makes God into a bad guy.

To expose the folly and hypocrisy of this view let me use a rather harsh illustration.

Suppose that an evil man breaks into your home, rapes your wife, kills your children, steals your possessions and sets your house on fire. Suppose that this evil man is caught and that all the

evidence points to him, fingerprints, DNA, his face on the home security camera, and your stuff in his house. He is guilty as charged.

Suppose the time comes to sentence him and that he deserves the death penalty. But instead the judge says to the man, that he wants the criminal to think nice thoughts about the judge and that he wants the criminal to know that the judge is a loving, kind, merciful judge, so the judge lets the man off with no punishment.

If you are the husband and father, how would you react? The right reaction would be righteous anger. You should be enraged over such a gross miscarriage of justice. It should scream against every sense of what is morally right and wrong. There is deep with all of us an innate sense of justice and fairness and that sense in us comes from our creator and His image in us.

When people think that God should be a God of love and not of justice they show that they have absolutely no sense about right and wrong, good and evil and how morally offensive and reprehensible our sin against a holy God really is.

The holiness of God requires that He be just. He is morally obligated to do something about sin and evil. To do nothing would be a gross miscarriage of justice.

Just as justice must be satisfied in our courts system in order for it to remain just, so God's justice must be satisfied in order for God to remain just and righteous and good.

We are guilty before a holy God. Our sin has incurred the holy, righteous, just wrath of our Holy God and because of our sin it's absolutely necessary that we be punished and eternally separated from God.

If God were not loving or merciful then He would leave it to us to pay the infinite penalty through eternal punishment in hell. But in His mercy God came up with another way, in fact, the only other possible way for His justice to be satisfied.

Since humans sinned, humans must satisfy God's justice. But since we are sinful we cannot make a satisfactory payment, plus we could never bear the justice of God. The only way to satisfy God's justice was for His Son to come and take on the same nature in which the disobedience was committed.

This was why the OT animal sacrifices had to use spotless, unblemished animals. They had to be spotless to teach the people that only those free from sin could make atonement for sin. The entire OT is a picture of the necessity of a sinless, atoning sacrifice to satisfy the justice of an offended Holy God.

So God had to come and take on our nature yet remain without sin, so that He could make satisfaction and bear the punishment.

God poured out His eternal, righteous anger and judgment on His own Son on our behalf. God put our sin on Him as if He had committed every one of our sins.

Some people have a very hard time with assigning anger and wrath to God. Some people think they have to clean up and improve the Scriptures and help get God off the hook for His temper.

Some so called theologians and scholars are calling the cross divine child abuse. They make God out to be a mean torturer. Allow three quick responses to this blasphemy:

First, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit were all in complete harmony and agreement.

Second, the Son willingly and voluntarily gave His life and the Father gave Him life back.

The cross was an act of divine love, not an act of hate or revenge.

Third, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are willing to go the very greatest depth to love us and save us, even suffering and death itself to lift us from death to life.

Those who call it child abuse don't understand it and are just mocking their caricature of it. They fail completely to recognize that God has come in love to seek and to save us. They make God out to be something He is not and cannot be. God is holy and pure and good. He cannot be unjust.

The Mercy of God.

Canons of Dort, Article II, 1:

God is not only supremely merciful, but also supremely just. And His justice requires (as He has revealed Himself in His Word) that our sins committed against His infinite majesty should be punished, not only with temporal but with eternal punishments, both in body and soul; which we cannot escape, unless satisfaction be made to the justice of God.

Canons of Dort, Article II, 2:

Since, therefore, we are unable to make that satisfaction in our own persons, or to deliver ourselves from the wrath of God, He has been pleased of His infinite mercy to give His only begotten Son for our Surety, who was made sin, and became a curse for us and in our stead, that He might make satisfaction to divine justice on our behalf.

We are guilty and worthy of damnation, but because of Jesus we receive mercy and obtain immortality and eternal life. We don't get what we do deserve. That's mercy.

Here's the surprise for some people. God has been merciful from the very beginning, from before the foundations of the earth. God showed mercy to Adam and killed an animal to cloth Adam and Eve. He made a promise in Genesis 3:15 to raise up a Savior who would crush Satan.

And then God made good on His promise and sent His own Son and killed His Son to cloth our sinful nakedness with His righteousness.

Jesus came to make satisfaction for our sins.

Think about how large a portion of each of the gospels are given to describing in detail the last week of Jesus' sacrifice for our sins to show the justice and mercy of God.

Matthew 21-28 (8); Mark 11-16 (6); Luke 19-24 (6); John 12-21 (11). 31 chapters of the Gospels.

The reason God became man, was so that there would be a way for God to satisfy His justice for our sins and pour out His mercy.

I Corinthians 5:21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Application and conclusion.

John Calvin sums up this happy exchange this way in his Institutes:

- we were estranged from God through sin,
- an heir of wrath,
- subject to the curse of eternal death,
- excluded from all hope of salvation,
- beyond every blessing of God,
- the slave of Satan,
- captive under the yoke of sin,
- destined finally for a dreadful destruction and already involved in it;

but then:

- Christ interceded as his advocate,
- took upon himself and suffered the punishment that, from God's righteous judgment, threatened all sinners;
- that he purged with his blood those evils which had rendered sinners hateful to God;
- that by this expiation he made satisfaction and sacrifice duly to God the Father;
- that as intercessor he has appeased God's wrath;
- that on this foundation rests the peace of God with men;
- that by this bond his benevolence is maintained toward them.

What man or woman will not be moved by the greatness of the punishment from which we have been rescued?

God had judicial grounds to punish us forever. *The case against us was without argument.* All the evidence was against us, it was our fingerprints and our DNA all over it, the eye witnesses saw it, we were guilty as charged.

But God made an exchange, a substitute. He put our sins on Christ and that became God's legal or judicial grounds to punish Christ.

So since everything that was against us was laid on Christ, now there wasn't anything left to charge us with. All the evidence was nailed to the cross and publicly and legally cancelled. It can no longer be admitted as evidence.

Romans 8:31, 33 If God is for us, who can be against us? ... 33 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

Christ's perfect righteousness as a human gave God judicial grounds to be reconciled to us and to accept us. Because we are righteous by the perfect obedience of Jesus, we have peace with God and pardon from all our sin.

II Corinthians 5:19, 21 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them ... 21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

He didn't just redeem us, He reconciled us.

In Christ righteousness and peace kiss, justice and mercy meet together.

Psalm 85:10 Steadfast love and faithfulness meet; righteousness and peace kiss each other.

Romans 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 8:1-2 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

Amazing love! How can it be? That thou, my God, shouldst die for me?"