

“You Do Not Reap What You Sow”
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Menifee United Church of Christ

A guy walks into a post office in February. He sees a man there writing “Guess Who?” on a thousand different Valentine’s Day cards. The guy says to the man, “Wow, you must be quite the ladies’ man!” The man says, “No, not really.” The guy says, “What do you mean, ‘Not really,’? You’re writing ‘Guess Who?’ on a thousand different Valentine’s Day cards. Why would you do that?” The guy says, “Oh, I’m a divorce lawyer.” You reap what you sow. And that guy was trying to sow something kind of creepy. It’s called karma. You reap what you sow.

The dictionary says that karma is found in eastern religions. Hinduism and Buddhism believe in karma. You reap what you sow. In other words, if you do good, then goodness will come back to you, either in this life or the next. Likewise, if you do bad, then something bad will happen to you, in this life or the next. Karma – you reap what you sow. For example, if you see somebody in need, and you help them, then if you’re ever in need, someone will help you. In the same way, if you see somebody in need, and you don’t help them, then somebody may see you in need and not help you. Karma – you reap what you sow. You see it in Hinduism; you see it in Buddhism. Do we see it in Christianity?

The Apostle Paul seems to believe in karma. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul writes that, “you reap whatever you sow.” Now that may be true in the material world. If you rob a bank, chances are you’re going to get caught and go to prison. You reap what you sow. But is that true in the spiritual world? Do we reap what we sow? Is there Christian karma? If you do something good for somebody, will goodness come back to you – Christian karma? If you do something bad, will something bad come back to you – Christian karma? Do we reap what we sow in Christianity? No! When Jesus was presented with the adulterous woman, he didn’t say, “Well, you know, you reap what you sow. The Bible says you’re supposed to be stoned to death, so I’m going to stone you to death. It’s Christian karma.” No! Jesus didn’t say that; Jesus didn’t do that. Jesus forgave her. Jesus essentially said there is no Christian karma. You do not reap what you sow. Jesus forgave her. Jesus gave her God’s grace.

I had a strange thought recently about God’s grace. I thought if anything really bad ever happened to me, I would cry out to God, “My God, my God why have you forsaken me? Why have you let something bad happen to me in my life? Is this something I deserve to have happen? I don’t think so.” But then one at a time, all the bad things I ever did in my life started coming back to me. “Oh, yeah. Yeah, there was that. OK, right. Yup that, uh huh. Yeah, uh huh, that was bad. OK. OK, God, I understand. I deserve whatever you do to me. Whatever bad thing you do to me for all the bad things I’ve ever done in my life. You reap what you sow. It’s Christian karma.” But that’s not true! You don’t reap what you sow. There is no Christian karma. God forgives us. God loves us. We are God’s children. We are made in God’s image. If God gave us what we deserve, oh my goodness! I can’t speak for you all, but this would not be a good thing for me. But God doesn’t do that. There is no Christian karma. We do not reap what we sow. God forgives us. God loves us. God has always loved us and will always love us. God does not promise us that we’ll go down to hell. God promises us that we’ll go up to heaven.

And Jesus promises us heaven on earth. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus sends out his disciples two by two. They’re to go from town to town to proclaim the Good News: the kingdom of heaven has come near. The kingdom of heaven has come near. The realm of God has come near. The home of the Almighty has come near. We have heaven on earth. That’s what Jesus promises us. Not Christian karma - you reap what you sow, you get what you deserve. No! Jesus promises us heaven on earth. A couple has a baby, a gift from God. God does not say, “Ah, ah, ah, fifteen years ago you made mistakes. Ten years ago you committed errors. Five years ago you committed sins. You reap what you sow. Christian karma. I’m not going to give you a baby.” No, God doesn’t do that. God says there’s heaven on earth. Heaven is all around us. The kingdom of God has come near. The realm of heaven has come near. The home of the Almighty has come near. God gives that couple a baby. There’s heaven on earth. A man finds a job. God has given that man a job. God does not say, “Ah, ah, ah, you made mistakes fifteen years ago. You committed errors ten years ago. You committed sins five years ago. I’m not going to give you a job. You reap what you sow. There is Christian karma.” No, God doesn’t do that. God gives the guy a job because God loves him. Because there’s heaven on earth. Because the kingdom of God has come near. The realm of heaven has come near. The home of the Almighty has come near for that man. A woman finds her soul mate. God has given her her soul mate. God doesn’t say, “Ah, ah, ah, you committed mistakes fifteen years ago. You committed errors ten years ago. You committed sins five years ago. You reap what you sow. There’s Christian karma. I’m not going to give you your soul mate.” No, God doesn’t do that. God says there’s heaven on earth. God’s grace forgives that woman for whatever mistakes she’s made, for whatever errors she’s made, for whatever sins she’s committed. God gives her heaven on earth. God gives her a soul mate because God loves her. Because God loves all of us. There’s heaven on earth.

Pope Francis seems to bring heaven to earth. Several months ago, Pope Francis said that atheists will go to heaven. Whoa! I imagine that atheists rejoiced! They were happy that the Pope said that God would take them into heaven. (You know, if they believed in heaven and if they believed in God and if they believed in the Pope, then they would be happy.) More recently, just a week or so ago, Pope Francis said that the Catholic church owes an apology to gay people that it has offended. Wow! That's about two thousand years' worth of apologies. Imagine all the gay people who have been beat up and sometimes even killed because of what the Catholic Church, and not just the Catholic Church, but the Protestant Church as well, has preached. They preached the seven passages of the Bible that say things like homosexuals are an abomination and should be killed. I can't speak on behalf of the Catholic Church, and I probably shouldn't speak on behalf of the Protestant Church, but I'm going to anyway. On behalf of the Protestant Church, I want to say to gay people, we owe you an apology for the way we've offended you over the past several hundred years. You are not an abomination. You should not be put to death. God loves you. You are God's children. You are brothers and sisters of Jesus. God created you in God's image. God blesses you. God loves you. God will always love you.

King David says God loves us all. In Psalm 30, King David writes "God, I cried out to you and you have healed me." That's what God does. God heals us. God helps us. God loves us. God doesn't say, "Ah, ah, ah! You've committed mistakes in your life. You've committed errors in your life. You've committed sins in your life. You reap what you sow. There is Christian karma." No! God says there is no Christian karma. You do not reap what you sow. You're forgiven. There's God's grace. God loves each and every one of us.

I've seen how God heals us just recently. Twice. My wife, Kathleen, had a bad parathyroid that had to be removed. She had to have an operation. And as with any operation, there was a chance that she could have died. But thankfully, she didn't. Because of her excellent surgeon. And, I believe, because God loves her. God healed her. God did not say, "Ah, ah, ah! Kathleen, you're not perfect. There's only one person that's ever lived that's been perfect, your husband – No! I mean, Jesus. So I'm not going to heal you. You reap what you sow. There is Christian karma." No! God didn't do that. God said, "There is no Christian karma. You do not reap what you sow. I'm going to heal you." And God healed her. And the moderator of this church, Chuck Otto, who is still on the mend, but he went in the hospital a couple of weeks ago with a heart problem. He had to have an operation. As with any operation, there was a possibility that he wouldn't make it through. But he did make it through. Because of an excellent cardiologist and because, I believe, God healed him. And God is still healing him. God did not say, "Ah, ah, ah, Chuck! You're not a perfect person. The only perfect person ever was Jesus. You reap what you sow. There is Christian karma. I'm not going to heal you. I'm going to let you die there on the operating table." No! God did not say that. God said, "You are my child. You're a brother to Jesus. I created you in my image. I love you. I'll always love you." And God healed him. Because God loves him.

The prophet Isaiah says that God has maternal love for us. Not just E-ternal love for us, but Ma-ternal love for us. In Isaiah 66, speaking on behalf of God, Isaiah writes, "As a mother comforts her child, I will comfort you." That's what God does. God loves us like a good mother loves her child. Because we are God's children. We are made in God's image. We are loved by God, blessed by God. God doesn't say, "I'm going to let you reap what you sow, I'm going to have Christian karma, I'm going to cause you to have pain." No! God loves us like a good mother loves her child. God forgives us.

When I was in twelfth grade, in Sunday School, my fundamentalist Sunday School teacher said that I needed to atone for my sins. He said that atonement meant that I had to be "at-one-ment with God." I had to atone for my sins or God wouldn't forgive me. God would not love me. God would not let me into heaven. I can't believe it, but basically I said back then, "No, God has always loved me. God will always love me. God has already forgiven me. God will let me into heaven one day (hopefully long into the future)." I'm sure my Sunday School teacher thought that I was a heathen, but that's what I believed. That's what I believe about me. That's what I believe about you. God has already forgiven you for whatever you've done in the past. For whatever mistakes you've made, whatever errors you've made, whatever sins you've committed, God forgives you. Because God loves you. Because you are God's child. Because God blessed you in the beginning and continues to bless you and will love you forever. Not because of anything we've done, but because of God's amazing grace.

Let us pray:

God of love,

Help us to know that we do not reap what we sow.

Help us to know that there is no Christian karma.

And help us to know that there is only your amazing grace.

Now and forever more

By the power of the Holy Spirit

And in the name of Jesus.

Amen.