

One thing that much impressed me as a result of Marxsen's lectures and the discussions that followed them is how close we are in our understandings of the essential content of Christian faith. In his understanding, as in mine, through Jesus we are brought to faith in God, in that we are offered eschatological communion with God without any prior conditions and, therefore, are given to live as God's children, as children of the Father and brothers and sisters of Jesus as well as of one another.

Thus I, too, would wish to say with Marxsen that we live through Jesus, that through Jesus we live as those who are reconciled to God, in communion with God, who gives Godself to us without preconditions (32). I, too, could summarize Jesus' offer by saying, Take God into your own life as the Father who wants to be with you, who offers to be in communion with you without your first having to produce certain accomplishments. This Father wants to come to you already now, not just in the future, at the end. If you have run away from him, he has run after you. You are dear to him. You are his children; all human beings are his children, and so you can live as his children. Every child is equally important to him. Therefore, there should be no rank order among you. As children you do not have to concern yourselves with your value. As children you have value from the Father. The world may turn against you, even possibly persecute you. But if you live with the Father, you are safe (32 f.).

Or, again, I, too, could say that what faith means is that those who are reconciled live reconciliation. In the name of Jesus, those who are reconciled say to others that they, too, can live as persons reconciled to God. Thus others are made an offer on behalf of, or in the place of, Jesus. If, on the authority of Jesus's word (and *only* on it), they risk living as reconciled persons by themselves enacting reconciliation, then (but *only* then) they discover that they, too, are reconciled, that they, too, can be what Jesus promised them: that as reconciled persons, they can bring reconciliation to others; that as forgiven, they can forgive; that as children of God, they can live with all persons as their brothers and sisters; that as those who live in peace with God, they can be peacemakers (43).