

## Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> June 2021 2 Corinthians 5:6-10

God makes all things New!

There's something about having new things isn't there? I remember my first new dress. I'm the youngest of four and have 2 older sisters so most of my clothes as a child were hand-me-downs. The day I got my first new dress, well I was so excited.

Don't get me wrong, there's nothing wrong with second-hand – it's good for the planet not to throw things away unless completely broken, completely irredeemable.

But there are things that just need to be new.

Our daughter is hoping to move to France and I asked if there was anything they needed.

Now Sarah is the queen of recycling, upcycling, re-using stuff but there was one thing that she thought would be good to have new – a mattress.

There are some things that are just better new...like toothbrushes, underwear...

But, you know our God is a God of new things.

In Genesis he created a new world, something that was beautiful and good. He created humankind in his image and it was very good.

And yet it wasn't long before that new thing became broken through sin. It doesn't take long for new things to be broken. I wonder how long it was between the tree of knowledge producing fruit and Adam and Eve munching on it? Not long, I shouldn't think.

And yet in the midst of that, God is committed to establishing a new thing – right there in the midst of broken people.

So, as we see in the book of Exodus, God creates a new people, called Israel and takes them to a new land, flowing with milk and honey so that they may be a light to the nation.

The problem was that although they were a new people in a new land with a new law, to keep them on the right track, they didn't have new hearts.

And so, the Old Testament is constantly calling people to a new heart, but they can't do it themselves. We can't get a new heart; it has to be given to us. And so, in Ezekiel, we read about a new covenant promise, where God promises to give his people a new heart and a new Spirit. To take out their heart of stone and to put in a fresh new heart. He says I'm going to do this. I'm going to bring about this new thing.

Well how does he do it? How does he bring about the new thing?

The way he brings about the new thing is through Jesus. Jesus came to fulfil that new covenant promise to make us new, dying in our place, rising again so that we could be made new.

Verse 17 of our reading says, Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here.

Paul writes how he is convinced that, through Jesus, he is NOW a new creation.

But hang on a minute. Didn't we hear from Andrea last week that Paul said we were wasting away? Looking at us, we don't appear to be new creations. But verse 16 of chapter 4 Paul writes. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed.

The new **has** come, the new **is** here.

Paul writes as one who has experienced the unsurpassable love of Christ that transformed him from a murderous threat-breathing persecutor of the church into a servant of the gospel. On the road to Damascus, Paul received a new heart. He is speaking out of his own experience into the lives of the Corinthian believers.

This new birth is humanly impossible. It only occurs because Christ, fuelled by divine love, took on the sin and death that alienates all people from God, who is the source of true life, the source of new life. As Andrea said 2 weeks ago, we have been reborn. WE have been given new hearts. New Spiritual hearts of love.

Christ's love is ultimate. It brings people into trusting relationship with God and each other and empowers them to live out that same love, which seeks the good and growth of others. This love compels Paul and his co-workers to continue their ministry of reconciliation amidst ongoing persecution, suffering, and threat of death.

The new has come, the new is here. And we are called to live by faith, Faith in what is unseen, faith in the new hearts we have been given. We live by faith and not by sight, not by what we see around us.

Paul knew that he could only be in one place at a time. He could either be at home in the body or at home with the Lord. And he longs to be at home with the Lord.

You see when we are at home with the Lord, we will see him face to face but until that day, the new has come but we see as though a glass dimly, we live by faith and not by sight. We trust in that which is unseen.

Paul knows that life in Christ is so much better than life without. Twice he says he is confident in this. He urges us to live lives that please God and goes on to remind us that we will all have to give an account of our lives on judgement day.

Don't let that frighten you. Remember our God is a just God. Our God is full of compassion, slow to anger and abounding in love. Remember that we cannot lose our salvation. As it says in Romans 8 v1 There is no more condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.

This is not a severe judge bent on condemning his servants. We are friends of God – I see it more like a child wanting to please a kindly and encouraging teacher.

I don't know about you, but I always worked harder for those teachers who were kind and encouraging.

Our God is a good God and we seek to please the Lord in all we do. As Paul writes, for Christ's love compels us.

And he goes on to say that from now on we regard no-one from a worldly point of view.

I remember standing at the bottom of a bank of escalators in a station on the London Underground at rush hour. I'd been thinking about this verse about not regarding anyone from a worldly point of view. As I looked up at the sea of faces, the sea of faces that looked burdened by life, what I imagined in my mind was Christ's Spirit hovering, ready to transform them all. I must have looked a bit odd, but I just stood there and beamed, knowing that God was in the business of making all things new. I was reminded by our Gospel reading today that the Kingdom of God is like a tiny mustard seed. All we have to do is scatter the seed and let God do the rest.

Next time you walk round the supermarket, perhaps you could look up at the sea of faces and remember that God is making all things new. Smile and say hello and send up a prayer for God's kingdom to come.

Then Paul says that wonderful word – therefore! Therefore, if anyone is in Christ...

That phrase 'in Christ' is one of Paul's favourite phrases and it's written over 165 times in the New Testament, and it is his way of defining what our salvation looks like.

As if we are enveloped in Jesus.

You see, when God the Father looks at us, he sees Jesus and so therefore he sees holiness and righteousness and a perfectly clean slate.

When we are in Jesus, we are safe, we are saved. We're no longer condemned.

It's a bit like the imagery of Noah's ark. The judgement of God come on earth but those who are in the ark, they are free from the judgement of the flood and they're saved.

Being within something set you free from whatever was on the outside.

If we're in Christ, by faith, we put our hope in him then what's on the outside of us can't ultimately harm us.

I want to finish with an illustration. I was really grappling with what it means to be IN CHRIST and I came across this illustration which I hope you'll find helpful.

So here's a box – and that represents you.

And this second box represents Christ

We read in Colossians 1, that Christ is in you, by the power of the holy Spirit.

So let's put the Christ box in your box.

When we say yes to Christ, he comes and makes his home in us. Christ is in us.

But then we read – in 2 Corinthians that we are IN Christ.

So this third box represents Christ – and we who have Christ in us are also in Christ.

We are in Christ and Christ is in us.

But then it says in Colossians 3 verse 3 - For you died, (like Paul says in 2 Corinthians, the old has gone the new is here.) But Paul goes further in Colossians – he writes 'you died and your life is now hidden with Christ'.... Anyone know the rest of that verse.... Your life is now hidden with Christ IN GOD.

Here, our 4<sup>th</sup> box represents God.

So now we have Christ in us, we are in Christ and hidden with Christ IN God.

By this visual representation of our salvation, I hope to show that if the evil one wants to have a go at us, he's got to get passed God first and we know our God is stronger than anything the evil one can throw at us. Remember our shield of faith?

If, for any reason the devil gets passed God, you know if we let our shield down, he comes up against Jesus. And well maybe for 2 days the devil thought he has won but on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day – Jesus defeated death, he defeated the evil one. He died to save us, from death.

So whatever you are dealing with right now. And it may be really hard. Remember you have Christ in you and you are in Christ, in God. Don't get disheartened. Hold on to your faith, hold on to that which is unseen.

God is at work making all things new.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come, the old has gone. The new IS here.

Praise be to God.

Amen.