

Union With Christ: Week 6
New Creation
2 Corinthians 5:17

I don't know about you all this morning, but watching the news cycle at times feels like its slow. Other times, it feels like all the bad news hits all at once. And in these last couple weeks it certainly feels like that.

From racialized violence to mass killings, and school shootings, to the massive covering up of years of sexual abuse...it feels like evil in its purest form has found its way on the news.

And that's just the stuff that makes the headlines, God knows what else is going on in the world that we're just not aware of.

And for what it's worth, this morning is not so much a sermon about current events because there are plenty of wise voices out there contributing to the conversation - rather - for this series, an appropriate question to ask is: is there any blessing we have "in Christ" for times like these?

For the darkest moments, where tragedy and pain abound. Not only on the front page that shakes us to our core but in our communities and our LifeGroups - and the million other moments that get at us and remind us "things are not ok"

What do we do with that? That's what we're getting at this morning. So if you have a Bible we're gonna be in 2 Corinthians 5.

[2 Corinthians 5:17](#)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

So right there, there's our key phrase we've been looking at for the last 6 weeks. In Christ. In Christ we are a new creation. The old self - with all of its sin, and brokenness, and failure - is dying away, the stuff of "Adam" is losing its power, and we, as God's people, are being transformed into something completely new.

The ways we've been saying it have been:

- The truest thing about us is Jesus
- We aren't defined by past sin.
- We aren't defined by past failure.
- We aren't defined by what someone else has done.
- We aren't defined by what we do, what we've done, or anything else.

Our identity has been firmly fixed to Jesus. And now, like we said last week, we're all in the process of learning to live like it... learning to live out what God has now firmly fixed as the truest true things about us and our world.

[2 Corinthians 5:18-19](#)

All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

Reconciliation in the Greek is *kat-al-las'-so*. It's a big word, but it means reuniting, or mending or putting back together.

Think about it, if you have kids, and you're putting together a Lego set. When you're given a million tiny pieces and you put it all together. What you're done, basically, is you've reconciled it. You brought back together what was broken.

And what Paul is saying here is that is exactly what Jesus has done for us. Through our sin that left us broken, on the Cross, Jesus absorbs the wrath of God for our sin, and in the process, He has brought back together what was broken. We're forgiven, we're adopted, we're being remade and transformed back into the types of people we were supposed to be in the very beginning.

But it doesn't stop there. Jesus is in the process of doing this not just for us but for the whole world. He wants the world, and everyone in it, to be put back together better than it ever was before.

And for what it's worth, that matters in times like these. What the news feed is shouting in a no uncertain terms is that our world and everyone in it has been busted up and broken into a million proverbial lego pieces. Our sin and evil wreaks havoc both on ourselves and the world that God made... and Jesus has come to put it all back right again.

This is why we make a big deal as Christians for the resurrection. Without it, this whole Christian thing is a lost cause.

But we know historically speaking, the resurrection did happen. Jesus conquering death is the proof that sin and death do not get the final say in this world because new life is on the other side. That just as a seed is buried into the ground, and that seed sprouts up and brings new life, so the resurrection is the seed that sprouts up the new creation.

Jesus' resurrected life is bringing resurrection life to the world. And if you are in Christ, then we are the fruit of Jesus' resurrection power in the world.

And like we talked about last week, nothing can stop Jesus' work. He will finish the work He started.

In fact if you jump ahead to the final chapters of the New Testament, we see exactly what this new creation is going to look like:

Revelation 21:1–5

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. [2] And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. [3] And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. [4] He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” [5] And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.”

Jesus is making all things new.

- In a world full of pain and suffering, Jesus is making all things new and He says a day will come when all tears will be wiped away and our crying will be over.
- In a world wracked by viruses and wars, violence of all shapes and sizes, sexual abuse, broken relationships, broken marriages, addictions, personal and corporate sin and more. Jesus is making all things new.
- In a world where death, feels like the great enemy who always wins, there will come a day when death itself will be no more - when the news cycle has nothing to report because all the evil in this world will be eradicated once and for all because Jesus’ resurrection power has taken root across the entire planet and new life will rule and reign once and for all.

This is where Jesus is taking the world. If you like to get theological with it, because I know I do, this is what’s known as the telos of the Bible. Telos is Greek, basically meaning, the ultimate end. To make the broken, renewed. To make the fallen, restored.

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But the issue, with all of this, is that we’re not there yet. We live in a “tension” of sorts between these two worlds... or in what the New Testament calls “the last days.” Which sounds cryptic and apocalyptic for sure, but it’s this idea that we are living in this final chapter in human history before we reach the ultimate end.

Jesus has come, the Kingdom is here and living inside of us, making us new... AND we haven’t yet arrived at the final picture we see in Revelation. We live in this tension of “already and not yet.”

- Already the new creation is here, but it’s not yet fully here.
- Already the Kingdom of God is at hand, but we’re not there yet.

So, what does this blessing mean for us in the meantime... in between this present darkness and future glory? How do we live in this tension?

Well, look at what Paul says next...

2 Corinthians 5:20

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

In other words, God is inviting the world to be restored. To experience what it means to be fully loved and fully known. To have peace and love and joy and contentment. To choose the good and not the evil. To seek wholeness and not brokenness. But, according to v.20, how is he going to do it? Through us! Verse 20 calls us ambassadors for Christ. This idea that we are His representatives, His spokespeople, so to speak to convey the goodness of God - to draw people in and compel others into this Kingdom way of living.

So I've got a friend of mine who just became a travel agent and works for Disney. And let me just say, she is one of the biggest Disney fans I know. She knows all the ins and outs and how to go on a budget and what parks to go to so you're not in line too long. Like, that sort of level.

Now, I'm one of those guys who didn't really do vacations growing up so Disney, as a parent was like "It's too expensive. We can't possibly do that." But then she became an ambassador for Disney and posting all this stuff and now I'm telling my wife, "When can we do this? We need to go!"

You see prior to my friend, I was pretty apathetic about it all, but then when she became an ambassador, I was compelled. She drew me into this.

And in a much greater way, that is what our call is for those of us who follow Jesus. To draw the world in, so that the world might be restored and reconciled back to God.

Elsewhere in 2 Corinthians, Paul talks about like this:

2 Corinthians 2:14-16

But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. 15 For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, 16 to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life.

Here Paul is using ancient war imagery, specifically about what happens when a Kingdom wins a battle. There would generally be a huge procession or parade of sorts, with trumpets, and soldiers, and incense burning in the air - and all of these sights and smells were to anticipate the last part of the procession which was the Victor of the battle - whether that be the general or the King. Or to put it simply, when you smelled the aroma of the procession, you knew the King was coming.

And so when Paul calls us the “aroma” of Christ, he’s saying we are part of this joyful procession. The King is coming. His Kingdom is spreading.

- So in the midst of a world that only loves those who love them and hates everyone else, when we choose to love our enemies, when we choose to press into community even when it's hard - that is the aroma of Christ, that is a sign that the King is coming
- In a world filled with bitterness and vengeance and violence, when we choose forgiveness and reconciliation, that is a sign of the Kingdom breaking through
- Where everyone is always and only concerned with personal gain and comfort, when we choose to be a people of radical generosity, it is a sign that Jesus is on the move and His new creation is spreading

You see in Christ... you have been blessed... to become a blessing.

And this matters in so many ways, but to make it concise for our time this morning, here are two reasons why this matters:

- 1.) Your life is desperate for purpose...

In an NYU graduation speech less than two weeks ago, one modern cultural figure said this:

I know it can be really overwhelming figuring out who to be, and when, who you are now and how to act in order to get where you want to go, I have some good news: it's totally up to you. I also have some terrifying news: it's totally up to you.

And that person? None other than Taylor Swift. Fwiw, I think that quote is rather revealing on two accounts. First, she gets it exactly right when it comes to the modern notion of story. For thousands of years, you lived into a story set for you, but now as modern secularists, it's on us. And second, she's also exactly right in saying this modern notion is it's absolutely terrifying.

Because if it's all on you to figure out the mystery of life, the meaning of the universe, who you are, and how to act - then how can we be sure even for a second that we're living into the right story? As human beings we are desperate for purpose, but how do we know what to live for?

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In his book, *Sacred Fire*, author Ronald Rolheiser, discusses the dilemma at length. He says at a certain point all of us go through this season of life, typically in middle age, called “the death of the honeymoon.”

And in this stage of life, we start to see reality for what it is - where the story we bought into and lived into is not all it's cracked up to be. Where you've been taught you can be anything you want to be and you can change the world - but reality sets in and you look at your life and it's not what you thought it'd be. You realize your spouse as great as they might be, doesn't complete you, but rather, they're broken and sinful like you. You realize you haven't changed the world,

you have a normal job. You don't have famous friends in a hip cool city, you have regular friends in a regular city. And this is your life. The big dream is over. And often this breeds a new kind of loneliness or disillusionment in us.

Rolheiser says, basically, when the purpose we strive for does not live up to what we thought, this is the death of the honeymoon. And people respond to this in a number of ways:

- You can choose to have a mid life crisis. And get a new car or truck, or move to a new city, or get a new job or a new spouse... because the life you chose just doesn't excite you anymore. You're discontent with your purpose, so maybe if you just switch some things around things will be better.
- And for what its worth, just so college students don't feel left out, this not just a thing people in their 30s and 40s struggle with anymore... there's now the "quarterlife crisis" where more and more twenty-somethings are finding out that chasing your dreams is a bit more boring than they were told, and it doesn't match up with what they see in social media and they don't know what to do about it.
- You can be resentful and joyless. Because life starts to feel monotonous and you're on mental auto pilot when you're at work or with your family
- You can be apathetic. And put in the bare minimum effort in your responsibilities as you daydream of what could have been.
- You can choose to be a workaholic - Attempting to solve the problem by making our "purpose" what we do at work.
 - Or maybe just more simply, we create little purposes of our own. We create something to fight for, because we need so desperately to live into some story to make sense of our lives.

PTA illustration

I have a friend of mine who shared a story with me of a recent PTA meeting he saw. At one point a woman gets up and says, "People always ask me, why aren't you nice in these meetings. I tell them, 'there's no room for pleasantries in a time of war.'"

Now that's a silly illustration but She's not the only one.. It's every where. Everyone is fighting a battle.

We can't not fight a battle. you have to be for something. And when you don't have it, you'll create it... whether that's culture wars, or your hobbies, or whatever.

You were made to give yourself to something that matters... and, in Christ, YOU HAVE IT!

2.) ...and In Christ you have it.

So, here's what I mean... if our new identity in Christ gives us new purpose... then everything in your life counts. Everything.

That purpose of being an ambassador for Christ, encompasses your career, your family, your hobbies and everything else under the sun... what Christ intends to do through you is not an add-on to all the other things you have going in your life... but rather, it is the north star of which everything else in your life is meant to orbit around.

- So at your work - it's not like you're simply there so that you can put your head down and make sure your bills are paid, rather because you are God's new creation, you are there to help usher in new creation
- And when you're at home - you're not there to do the bare minimum with your family so that you can get to do what you want to do - rather you are the aroma of Christ. You are there to help bring the Kingdom into your house through constantly loving, and disciplining and forgiving your kids...and regularly asking them for forgiveness to when you mess up

All this to say... your ordinary is not insignificant.

now maybe this looks like you going into full-time missions or starting a business so that you can be generous or going into law and politics to fight injustices head-on...but for the large majority of us, God is calling you and me here for the long-haul.

God has you where He has you for a reason. Your home, your job, your neighborhood, our city - it's no accident you're here. God intends to use you, by His Spirit, to reconcile the world to Himself. And he's not calling us to "change the world" and address every societal issue, rather, he calls us to use the time we have with the responsibilities we have, to step into the opportunities that are right in front of us.

And so what might it look like in your everyday ordinary life to put in that extra 5% to bless the people around you and usher in the aroma of Christ? I'll give you some examples:

- So I know most schools in our county are wrapping up for the year - what if you put in that extra 5% of mental energy - and offer that tired, overworked, and probably frightened elementary school teacher and say - "Hey, thank you for putting it all out on the line for these children this year. Listen, our family prays together for people in our life, and we'd love to pray for you this summer... is there anything we could pray for you?"
- Parents I know bedtime can often feel like one of the hardest parts of your day - and what if you put in that extra 5% and bless your kids with encouragement and praise as you pray for them each night
- How about when that friend comes to you with their struggle or pain? What would it look like for you to - not in a weird or pushy or contrived way - but in a sincere way - to share what Jesus has done in your life and what He can do in theirs? Would you take that 5% extra energy and invite them to your Lifegroup or Gathering?
- What would it look like for you if you knew you were in your neighborhood on purpose? That God had put you there as His ambassador? Would you walk a

little more slowly in the evenings? Maybe praying as you go? Would you take that 5% extra energy and speak to your neighbor instead of just waving and nodding as you go by.

You may not know it, but when you step into this, you're planting seeds of New Creation. And 99.999% of the time it's not going to be big and flashy, it's gonna feel pretty normal, and you won't see the world change overnight. But over time, day in and day out, you as an ambassador for Christ as you plant these seeds, the Holy Spirit will use it to bring the Kingdom of God down to Earth.

Conclusion

So, I just want to leave you with a word of encouragement. You were made for this... or rather, you were made new for this.

I know I began by talking about how it feels, especially this week, but honestly for the past few years our world has just lost its mind... our world... your world... your friends, your family, your neighborhood, your workplace, your school... need putting back together in Christ.

They need the life, hope, joy and peace found in the message of reconciliation.

And I think the only thing that would keep us from this, is believing that greatest problem facing the world today is something other than what it actually is.

- The greatest problem isn't lack of education, isn't healthcare, isn't legislation or government, it's not mental illness or whatever else.... Not that those things don't matter, they absolutely do!!!

But the biggest need is that there are men and women who have been separated from God by their sin... and do not know the life-changing message of Jesus Christ.

Don't be misled. People need the fragrance of Christ in you.

We want to be a problem for the forces of darkness in the world. We want to be a problem for the great enemy that seeks to keep people from the love and grace of Jesus.

And for what it's worth, I believe that's who you are.

And to know that if you are in Christ... that's not just who I believe you are... but who God says you are. A fragrance. An ambassador. A new creation.

At our workplaces, neighborhoods, ballfields, LifeGroups, etc. It's a purpose so big it takes a lifetime to accomplish.

So, let's step into it together... Because we know down in our bones the King is coming. The King is on the move. And He is using us to announce His arrival.

Pray