

October 25, 2020    New Beginnings Pt. 6    2 Corinthians 5:11-21

At the heart of the matter, believing in God, following Jesus is about new life. In the Scripture portion I have chosen for this week, which in normal times (and these are not normal times), we find definition of the nature of the new life in Jesus. Faith in Jesus does not mean we have become perfect. Were that true, as individuals we would never make mistakes. The fact is we do. If we had become perfect, the church would never make mistakes, and clearly it has, and has had to repent of its sins, even as we as individuals must repent of our sins. And yet having said all of that, we cannot deny, nor can the world in its moment of clear sightedness, deny, that we have been changed. We, through faith in Jesus, in the joy of the Spirit of God, have made a new beginning. 2 Corinthians 5:11-21 reminds us of some of the characteristics of the new life we find ourselves living. Take heart! The power and the love of God is real and is within you.

The first thing that Paul shares about the new life we have, the new beginning we have experienced is this: “since we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men.” It is true. Our perspective has been changed. We have by the grace of God become God fearing people. That is to say, not that we have become perfect, but in the experience of being forgiven by and through the Lord, we now see the world and our neighbours, our family and friends, in the light of this fact: we cannot escape the reality of Jesus redeeming love. And that,

and that alone is the reason we try to persuade people to join us, to walk with us, that they might share in the blessing we have received. We are indeed like people who having been so hungry, that we delight in a crust of bread, we want to share that bread of life with others.

Paul expands on that thought when he says, “if we are out of our mind, it is for the sake of God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you.” (2 cor. 5:13) At a number of points in my life as a disciple of Jesus, friends have said to me, family members have said to me, “You believe that stuff? You are crazy!” I have had to smile and say, well, if I am crazy it is because I have seen God and been touched by HIS healing love. I cannot deny what I have seen and experienced of the presence of the living Christ! And if there is the slightest of possibilities that I am not crazy, one must ask why do I do what I do, with the people I serve and associate with? I had the privilege of visiting Al Haswell shortly before he died. I prayed over Eugene Burrell when he was passing away. I blessed John Mercer the last time I saw him, standing at his bedside. It is not about me, or my being good. It is about the reality of the love of God for these men who trusted me and walked with me in pursuit of the glory of God and the love of Jesus.

“And (Christ) died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised again.” (2 Cor. 5:15) So there you have it in a nutshell, in capsule form. Jesus bore the cross clearly calling HIS followers, to cast aside the motive of living to advance their

own interests. HE calls us to follow HIM living for others, driven to do so in answer to HIS call that we should live for them, in the service of the living God, in the power of the Holy Spirit, in the love of Jesus. That is the reason we bind ourselves together as the church in the midst of the world, in a community we call home, seeking above all to serve others and share what we have received with them.

“So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way we do so no longer.” (2 Cor 5:16) The people we know, the people we meet, having made this new beginning by faith in Jesus, we do not regard them as a means to an end. We are not motivated to be friends because of what they might do for us. Rather our eyes are set upon God. We attempt (note this: we do not always succeed) we try to see them as the Lord sees them, as sheep needing a shepherd, as people who stumbled and fell and need a hand to get up again, to walk. And this is astounding. Paul admits he once viewed Jesus as someone he could use to advance his career. Paul’s coming to faith changed that. He now finds himself bowing to the will of the Lord in things great and small. He views life in the light of eternity. He has been changed. By the grace of God, he has made a new beginning. Me too. You as well. In 2 Cor. 6:2 he explains it this way, with a verse from Isaiah 49. The Lord is speaking. “In the time of my favour I heard you, and in the day of salvation, I helped you.” New life. New beginnings. Praise the Lord.

Let us pray;

Lord Jesus, be with us as we seek to serve YOUR precious will even in the time of Covid-19. Protect our loved ones. Protect our friends. Bless those who think you are a myth, and open their eyes that they too might see. Jesus, YOU are all compassion, pure unbounded love you are, visit us with YOUR salvation, enter every trembling heart. Amen