

LENT 5 – 2008

2nd Corinthians 5: 14 - 21

Our congregation's Mission is stated this way: To listen to, to live for, and to show Jesus Christ, God's ONLY Savior for ALL people.

Certainly the verses of God's own Word I just read to you encourage us in that very mission. These words of our Lord surely compel us to live for Jesus and to share Him. Our Lord's words certainly show us that He is the ONLY Savior for ALL people.

So, let us listen to Him. He assures us that

If Anyone Is in Christ Jesus, He Is a New Creation.

Christ accomplished our new creation. Jesus our Lord God in the flesh, died for all. That is stated twice for emphasis. Actually, as we will see, it is stated in a different way a third time. God is telling us by this repetition that this is a very important fact. Jesus died for all people, past, present, and future.

This is vital to each one of us personally. When we feel like failures, when we, in weakness, sin again, when the world treats us badly, know that Jesus died for you. If He died for all, He died for me and you.

Saint Paul says the effect of Jesus dying for all is the same as if all people died for their own sinfulness. Because He did, we do not need to.

Jesus also rose from the dead. He did that for us too. That assures us that one day, He will raise our mortal bodies to eternal, glorious life.

Imagine it, God died for all. God rose for all. That is who Jesus is, God in the flesh. Saint Paul assures us in Colossians that the Father made all his fullness dwell in Christ so that through Christ's death God could reconcile everything to Himself.

These verses certainly emphasize that reconciling God has done for us and the world. Five times in these few verses we hear the word 'reconciliation' or 'reconcile'.

Of course, this assumes the whole world needed to be reconciled to God. It is. We know why. Sin made all of us rebels against God. Sin ruined the relationship. All the sin is on our side. All the righteousness is on the side of God. And because of this, God was the only One who could really do anything to help the situation. Nothing obligated God to do that except God's own self-motivation. It is God's love. God's love for us sinners would not let go of us. So, God planned out how to reconcile us to Himself. Jesus is God Himself.

God made Jesus, our Redeemer and Savior, in whom was no sin at all, to be sin in our place. The word 'our' includes the world, all, which He was reconciling. Jesus took all of our sin. He made it His very own. It was credited to His account. And, at the same time, God credited Jesus' holy, perfect righteousness, which is God's righteousness, to our account. We emptied our accounts of all sin. He filled our accounts with His righteousness. In Romans 5 it is stated like this, "When we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son." And it goes on to say, "Having been reconciled, we shall be saved through His life." There is the resurrection again!

This is the Gospel message! All this that God has done for us enables us to live for Christ through faith in Him.

So that we are able to live and serve God as His ambassadors God has recreated us by the Gospel. He sent the Gospel message to us in Word, Baptism, and Holy Communion, filled with His living power by the Holy Spirit. He planted faith in our secret hearts. This enables us to see Jesus Christ in a new way. The old fleshly, worldly way of seeing Jesus

only sees Jesus as a poor religious teacher who was treated badly and died a horrible death on a cross a long time ago. But the Gospel opens our eyes to see God in that body. The Gospel shows His death as a great victory over sin, death, and Satan for all the rest of us. And it opens our eyes to His actual rising from the dead to eternal glorious life. We see Jesus is this new way.

And we see everyone else in a new way. We no longer look at people merely as handsome or beautiful or not, as rich or poor, as educated or not, as powerful or not, as old or young, as talented or not so talented. We simply see everyone in view of what Jesus did. He died for all of them and He rose to life for them. See people that way. If they trust in Jesus they are already new creations in Christ. If they do not rely on Jesus, they still could become new creations by God's powerful Gospel.

This equips us, as people alive in our Savior, with an office and a message. Paul was so driven to get the Word of the Gospel of reconciliation out to the world that some called him crazy. Don't let unbelievers calling us crazy or fanatics or 'Bible thumpers', or such things stop us. Paul came to the Corinthians saying "Be reconciled to the God who has reconciled you to Himself by means of Jesus."

We can look into the face of every man, woman, and child on this earth and say that. It is the truth, and it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.

So what God has done for us and in us enables us to live for Christ. Despite our gradual outward, visible wasting away in this earthly tent, we are being renewed inwardly, spiritually by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel day by day. We live, not by what is seen, but by what is unseen, including our ruling Lord over all things, including our eternal, glorious, immortal body at home in heaven with Jesus one day, with the Holy Spirit already having been given us as a deposit from God guaranteeing that whole eternal future from God. We live to please Jesus, fueled, empowered and motivated by all that our Lord has done for us.

And this life includes the office of ambassador in which we will offer the Gospel that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself to all people. God took our place on the cross so that now we can speak, as if God Himself were speaking: 'Be reconciled to God'. We have listened to Christ this morning. By faith He has already made us alive, so that we can live for Him and share Him as His ambassadors, telling all that Jesus is God's ONLY Savior for all people. Amen.