

Fourth Sunday in Lent
Sermon Text: 2 Corinthians 5:16-21
Related Text: Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32
Date Preached: March 14, 2010

“So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new.”

One thing that is very difficult for us to do is see someone as a new creation. In fact, it is so difficult for some that they deny the possibility that anyone can be a new creation. One reason for this difficulty lies in the judgments we make. Another arises because of how we've been hurt by the old creation.

A mother questions her married daughter. The mother is puzzled over how her daughter can take back the now repentant husband that had cheated on her with another woman. How do you know he won't do that again, asks the mother? She might also say something such as, “I never liked him anyway.”

Behind such a question is the fear of her daughter being hurt again; the trust is gone. Statements about the faults of the old creation may be used as a means of trying to protect ourselves against future hurt. This mother is not alone in her concerns. Such concerns arise anytime someone has changed their life.

The family of the alcoholic has heard this story before. How can I know for certain that you mean it this time when you say you're done with the liquor? So to isolate our fears over being hurt again by this same person we develop a cloud. It serves to distance ourselves emotionally when it is hard to do so physically. Yet, this cloud poses a different problem for us.

When people we know have made mistakes, when they have a reputation for poor choices, improper behavior, this cloud limits our ability to see them as anything but that old creature.

So instead of seeing this new creation coming down the lane toward the Father's house, we live as the elder brother looking through a cloud of suspicion, judgment and our own sense of fairness.

Note how the elder brother is quick to question the perceived fairness of the Father. "Where is my party? Does my loyalty to you mean nothing?" The elder brother has not only been hurt by the leaving of his younger sibling, but he surely would have seen the hurt his father experienced at the time.

Thus, like the elder brother it is hard to see this from the Father's perspective. I suspect that the reason we

see this as being hard to apply in our lives is because of our failure to see ourselves as a new creation.

Sinners that we are, we have strayed. We admit our sin weekly as we confess our failure to live as God's children. Some of our sin is known. Some we have hidden from ourselves or come up with some way to justify our sin as being right and necessary.

While we have confessed our sin, remember the words of forgiveness that God our Father bestows. You are forgiven. Through Christ, God has reconciled us to himself, refusing to keep count of our trespasses.

Thus, God has already come running out to greet us. He has welcomed us back. In baptism we are clothed with Christ, washed anew in this life saving Word. The old creature is put to death, we are a new creation.

Since God has welcomed us back and transforms us into a new creation, let us take every opportunity to see our neighbors as a new creation. That is precisely how God looks at us. We who are in Christ regardless of our past, is a new creation.

And that is the challenging opportunity that God has given us. God has given us the opportunity to experience reconciliation between our neighbors and family members. Such reconciliation is a gift from God.

So the opportunity is available to us to see our neighbors as a new creation. Granted it comes with some risk. The risk is that in their new life in Christ they may still do things that are not right and end up hurting us. But then, we too are still sinners ourselves.

The reward that goes with this risk is just too great to pass up. The reward of treating one another as a new creation is the celebration God throws. It is the abundance of life that we can share with each other. It is the promise and hope that one day we will dwell in the Father's house, forsaking any desire to leave.

Such promise and hope continues to encourage us as we live out this transforming grace of being a new creation. And so it is that we rely on the beauty of God's love to share the good news that it is still not too late to come home, for in so doing there the Father is to welcome us into his loving arms.

AMEN.