

SERMON – PASTOR GREG
27.03.2022

2 Corinthians 5:16-21. *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. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation; the old has gone and the new has come. All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And He has committed to us this message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. **WHAT IS YOUR MOTIVATION TO FOLLOW CHRIST?** How did you become a Christian? Why are you still a Christian? How many times have you thought that you have disappointed God? How many times have you been disappointed with God? Why is there so much grief and guilt in your heart as you pray for your family and friends? Why do you still keep coming here?

The apostle Paul experienced so much suffering and rejection in his life but he never gave up on God. What motivated him? Just before our reading we have these words: ***For Christ's love compels us...We are convinced that One died for all...He (Jesus Christ) died for all, that those who live (in Christ) should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and who was raised (to everlasting life).*** Paul was motivated by the love that Jesus Christ had for him- most clearly revealed to him as he travelled on the road to Damascus (Acts 9). God revealed His love for Paul through Jesus Christ and this in turn created a love for God in the heart and mind of Paul. It is God's love for us and our love for Him that motivates us to follow Jesus Christ.

And this love turns us away from our sinful thoughts, desires and selfishness and instead turns our hearts and minds towards Jesus Christ. It began when we first heard the word of God and it continues each and every day- this desire to love God with our thoughts, words and actions.

NEW CREATION. And this love from God which creates faith in our hearts enables us to see that God is re-creating the world- today and every day. With the eyes of faith, we see that God is at work everywhere and in everyone. Especially in our own very being: ***For if anyone is in Christ, he/she is a new creation. The old has gone and the new has come.*** Romans 6 also speaks of this reality: *Don't you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death on order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. (See also John 3 and Galatians 3:26).* We are born again. The old has gone- the new has come! But sadly and tragically the old Adam and the old Eve continue to resurface each and every day. So at the same time we all continue to be Saints and Sinners until that day when we enter into heaven.

RECONCILIATION: RESTORATION TO DIVINE FAVOUR. Not only was Paul motivated by God's love he also understood that God had reconciled not only him but all human beings to Himself in and through Jesus Christ. Inspired by the Holy Spirit and knowing the TORAH Paul now understood that that all human beings are born in bondage to sin, the fear of death and enslaved to Satan. And us such we were under God's holy and righteous wrath. But in Christ God has reconciled us to Himself. In Christ, God had restored us to Divine Favour. Now we live in and under the love of God.

WE ARE CHRIST'S AMBASSADORS. At the end of the Gospel according to Matthew Jesus gave this command to you and me- to his church: *Go and make disciples of all nations.* God has given us this ministry of reconciliation. And this message of reconciliation is: *Christ has atoned for all sins. We implore you: Be reconciled to God in Christ.*

The message of reconciliation has two aspects to it and they both belong to each other. As an old song goes: YOU Can't HAVE ONE WITHOUT THE OTHER. In Lutheran terminology it is LAW and GOSPEL. The LAW tells us that we are sinners and as such we are under God's wrath. The GOSPEL tells us that Christ died for sinners and that salvation is ours by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. As Paul writes: **CHRIST BECAME SIN SO THAT WE MIGHT BECOME RIGHTEOUS.** Righteous in the sight of God. Restored to a right and proper relationship with Him So that might once again walk with God in the cool of the evening in His garden of delights.

And because of all of this: ***So from now one, we regard no one from a worldly point of view.*** Instead we see other Christians as the holy, chosen, beloved, redeemed and adopted children of God. Yes, they like us, are sinners but they are also saints. Think of the person in this church that you struggle with intensely or those you might not like- how does God see that person? We too are called to see our brothers and sisters in Christ as fellow citizens of heaven- loved- dearly loved by God. Let us continue to be reconciled to each other and to God through Jesus Christ, His Son our Lord. Amen.