

Sunday, September 22, 2019

2 Corinthians 5: 16-21

John 20:19-23

Be Changed: New Faith New Hope

How many of you have ever had a flat tire while driving your vehicle? You might hear a sound, feel the unevenness of the tires on the road and then you wonder 'what was that?' What did you do? After pulling over to the side of the road, you get out of the vehicle and sure enough one tire is flat and deflating even more as you watch. Then what do you do? Many carry Roadside Assistance programs which is part of the dealership service package or have help through the CAA. So you call, wait and worry because you cannot go anywhere or do anything in those moments. Of course the tire needs to be changed and so when help arrives, the situation gets resolved with a new temporary tire put on the vehicle and you can continue your drive to your destination. However you also must know that the temporary tire you now drive on is geared only to get you to the garage a few kilometres away. Once you get to the garage you get help and possibly fixed up with your tire repaired or replaced. Here, the temporary tire is taken off and a regular tire whether just repaired or a new one is put on. The pressures of all 4 are checked and then it is safe to drive again.

When it comes to tires, if there is one flat, the vehicle just cannot run properly it has to be changed in order to have the vehicle at its best.

We speak of change so much these days- not just the need of changing a flat tire but that everything seems to be rapidly changing- children grow, programs for training are not what they used to and even curricula for elementary children is different than what was taught one generation before. Technology development has some part in this but when we look at people we are always changing by getting older each day that goes by. And this is something that we cannot change no matter how much anti-aging cream we use- we all get older and older looking.

As we look at the second topic of Being Changed as part of our series on "Being a part of Christ's Church" we must realize that when we choose to be a follower of Jesus Christ we will change. In Paul's Second letter to the Corinthian church as they were facing growing pains he wrote about the problems that some of the members were experiencing. Paul wrote that when you choose to follow Jesus, four things will happen. The first thing is that you will have a new perspective. "From now on we regard no one from a human point of view because we no longer see this way." What occurs is that your new perspective is not just a little bit of change like a leaf changing colours, but a whole new life. Your

perspective will be as if you put on new lenses to see the world and your focus will be renewed. You will see the world as Jesus sees it and because of this you are a new creation. Everything old has passed away, everything has become new.

How many of you enjoy potatoes this time of year? I just think that what we call New Crop potatoes taste the best. The old ones are great—boiled, baked, fried, whatever way, but since the new crop has come in there is something special about them. and then reheated with green onions- what a treat!

This is what Paul states. You are like that new potato something special because it is fresh and new. Yet in order to keep focused and serving the One who made you in the best possible way, you need to refocus and gain new insights, wisdom and even take on new opportunities to help others.

And Paul continues that the second thing that will happen is that there is a mission of reconciliation which we are to share with all whom we meet. Have you ever spoken with the cashier at any store at all? How many time must they say “have a good day” to their customers in any given day. What if you shared a story about what you bought some of the grocery items? In the next few weeks, Eleanor and Geri hope that you will support the outreach project of buying some lightweight food items to send to new friends in Nunavut. Why not share a story about this with those in the grocery store line up? This is what it means to be given a special ministry because we have been changed by Jesus.

Through Jesus we have been reconciled to God the Father and now Jesus calls us to go and share in the ministry of reconciliation with others. Who else do you see on a regular basis? Friends, people walking on the street, people you share activities with? It is up to you who have been changed to tell others of your change in perspective, your view of the world with Christ’s focus.

The third part of what happens when we are changed by Christ is that we become his ambassadors. What does it mean? It means to do like what we first learned in early years—show and tell that is we make a point of sharing what it means to live for Jesus and how your life was changed for the better. What impact choosing Jesus has made as you left your old way of life on who you are today? Or how have you been reconciled with God and others because of Christ’s love.

When Jesus was raised to life, he offered peace to the disciples that first evening. He also breathed on them, the Holy Spirit. And through this gift he said, “If you forgive the sins of any they are forgiven them if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” As ambassadors of Jesus we are to forgive those who have hurt us and we will be forgiven. God is appealing through us to do something good- so

that all may be reconciled to Him. We are to share the story of Jesus and how his death and resurrection opens the way to forgiveness.

Paul wrote that God made Jesus to take upon himself our sins. Jesus died on the cross so that God would receive his life instead of ours. Jesus life on earth was without sin yet as he prayed prior to his arrest he prayed with a heart so heavy that he even asked God to take away this task not knowing how he could withstand it all. Even from the cross Jesus called out “My God, My God—why have you forsaken me.” And just hours after he is raised to life- he breathes on the disciples and offers them the gift of reconciliation of the cross and his death. His resurrection now has new meaning and because of this, there is hope beyond the cross.

We are changed because of Jesus’ death and resurrection. When Jesus spoke, “IT is finished” then breathed his last the world changed. God’s Son was dead and he was the one to save it. Those who had followed his teachings and watched him heal others were not there out of fear. Yet it s because he died that we might have new life.

This new life is in Christ and his followers who gather to worship him, pray like he taught us and to lift up God as our Creator. We just need to see Jesus for who He is! The one who changes our lives and our hearts. And it is because of this experience of Jesus who comes into our hearts—we are changed. God knows us through and through and so as God sent Jesus to us, we now must respond to Jesus who said, So Send I you. Now it is your turn.

You might say, this is good but what can I do.. You are only one person. Yet as C.S. Lewis writes, “The Christian life is simply a process of having your natural self- changed into a Christ self and that this process goes on very far inside. One’s most private wishes, one’s point of view are the things that have to be changed.” This perspective is summarized by Reinhold Niebuhr when he wrote

God, give me grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed,
 Courage to change the things which should be changed,
 and the Wisdom to distinguish the one from the other.

Living one day at a time, Enjoying one moment at a time,
 Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace,
 Taking, as Jesus did, This sinful world as it is,
 Not as I would have it, Trusting that You will make all things right,
 If I surrender to Your will, So that I may be reasonably happy in this life,
 And supremely happy with You forever in the next. Amen.

What this Serenity prayers asks God is simply for us to change us so that we will live the way of love as Christ teaches. Loving others as they are, helping and reaching out when others are in need and growing in faith as we strive to live faithfully each day as we change and grow to be like Jesus..

Let us pray as we hear this song:

Change my heart O God make it ever true.

Change my heart O God, may I be like You.

You are the Potter, I am the clay; Mold me and make me,

This is what I pray.

Change my heart, O God, make it ever true;

Change my heart, O God, may I be like YOU

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