

NEW CREATIONS IN CHRIST (1)

Dr. Fred Fourie ~Sunday, January 21, 2007

Dear Friends, before we read Scripture, I need to mention a dilemma that I find myself in today. First, I want to tell you about another preacher who went out to make some house calls in the afternoon. He knocked at one door, but no one answered. He kept knocking, louder and louder. Finally, there was a tiny voice from within, which said, ``Come in. Come in." Therefore, he tried the door, found it open, and stepped inside the living room. He heard the voice again, "Come in. Come in." He followed the sound down the hallway to the kitchen. From inside the kitchen he heard the voice saying, "Come in. Come in." He entered the kitchen, heard a growl and found himself face to face with an enormous, ferocious, growling German shepherd police dog. The dog lunged at him, pinning him against the wall with his enormous paws on his shoulders, snarling and breathing in his face. At that moment, the preacher saw a parrot sitting in a cage over to one side of the kitchen and realized that it was the parrot who invited him to come in, yelled, "You idiot parrot! Don't you know any other words?" The parrot said, "Sic'em, sic'em!"

Well, my dilemma is that today's scripture readings are so far-reaching and powerful that it is impossible to bring their message in only one sermon. The obvious solution was to divide the subject in two separate messages. I do hope that you will also be able to be here next Sunday, for the conclusion of the message, "New Creations in Christ."

Our first reading is from

Therefore, if anyone is in
CHRIST
a n y o n e
h e i s a n e w
CREATION
N E W
the old has gone, the new has
COME!
Ch r i s t
2 C o r i n t h i a n s 5 : 1 7

2 Corinthians 5:17-21 So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake, he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Revelation 21:1-5 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away." And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true."

Here ends our Scripture Readings – May God's spirit touch, guide and change us today!

~~~~~  
One has to be blind not to notice to what extent 911 changed and are still influencing our lives. It is as if a downward spiral of terrorism and counter terrorism; war, religious division and hatred is dragging the world deeper and deeper into darkness. The Doomsday Clock is a symbolic clock face maintained since 1947 by the Board of Directors of the Bulletin of the

Atomic Scientists. It uses the analogy of the human race being at a time that is a 'few minutes to midnight' where midnight represents destruction by nuclear war. During the past week, the Scientists adjusted the doomsday clock to show a mere five minutes before midnight.

At the dramatic moment when the Second World War ended General Douglas MacArthur spoke the first words of peace to a waiting world! "We have had our last chance. If we do not now devise some greater and more equitable system, Armageddon will be at our door. **The problem is theological and involves a spiritual improvement of human character. It must be of the spirit if we are to save the flesh.**"

The Club of Rome is a global think tank and a centre of innovation and initiative. It brings together scientists, economists, businesspersons, international high civil servants, and heads of state and former heads of state from all five continents to seek and suggest solutions to the greatest problems of the world. Half a century ago, the "Club of Rome" financed an ambitious project, spending millions of dollars to engage some of the best-qualified persons in the world to study the most serious international problems of those days and to propose possible solutions. The question behind this massive project was clear: "How can we change the world for the better?"

The appointed people worked diligently and hard. Finally, they came up with a comprehensive report. What was their conclusion? It was still the period before AIDS and International Terrorism. What did they find? What was the most serious problem? Was it the widespread hunger and poverty all over the world? No, these matters were mentioned, but not as the greatest problem. Was it the danger of nuclear war, so critical in those first years of the cold war? No, not that either. Was it then the root of so much evil - money - the mighty dollar? No. Was it global concerns? Was it the depletion of the ozone layer? No. Was it the destruction of the rain forests? Was it global warming? No, No, No!

The unanimous finding was that there is something wrong with all humankind. The "Club of Rome" concluded, as Douglas MacArthur did, that our world's biggest problem is **in the nature and depravity of us as human beings.**

Listen to what the report said: "**We gossip, we demean, we hurt, we assassinate one another with our words, attitudes and deeds. We hate, we destroy, and we are prejudiced against one another.** We are looting the earth and its resources. We, us, no one else are causing the gradual destruction of our world."

In order to turn the doomsday clock back; to counter the hatred; to replace war and strife with peace and tolerance of those different from us, we must begin at the source of destruction, deep within you and me. We must learn how to recreate human nature. There are factors determining your life and mine. **We are governed from inside, by our very nature, our background, environment and education?** In a sad pathetic way, we have become the captains of our souls and the masters of our fate. We are destroying the hope for a better world from the inside out.

This is exactly where the power and beauty of our Christian faith comes in. The closing message in the book of Revelation proclaims a changed world where the distance that we have created between God and us will be no more.

John says, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and **God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.**"

The Apostle Paul wrote to the first-century community of Corinth in response to problems that had appeared in the community since he had left. The problems were significant,

including divisions in the church in which different members tried to usurp one another's authority and some members took others to court, pressing ethical questions, public scandals and disruptive and chaotic behavior. Paul knew that the one problem that undergirds all others was that they did not grasp the nature of Christian salvation. There is little point in proclaiming the resurrection of Christ unless you and I undergo a spiritual resurrection through Christ. Church membership was not going to do it for them. A true relationship with Christ makes you a Christian – nothing else does. Paul says, "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away, see, everything has become new!"

Even today, you and I can exchange our hateful, harming and selfish innermost self and become a new creation of Christ! It was the message of salvation then and it is the message of salvation to this very day. The words of Jesus are still echoing through the ages. "See, I am making all things new." "In and through Christ our lives together will be a new creation."

Our words about the love of Christ are empty until we have become a new creation and live that love. In Jesus' light, we see and touch the face of God! Matthew's Gospel says, "But strive first for the kingdom of God and God's righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

Change begins in us through Christ and spreads into the world as we work, strive and live as Jesus did. He taught us to pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

When and if God's Kingdom comes on earth, God's Will shall be our will and God's way shall be our way. Then God shall indeed live amongst mortals and wipe all tears from our eyes. Then we shall destroy each other and our beautiful world no more.

**AMEN.**

---