

Sermon, Lent 4C, March 30, 2025
Sylvia.miller.mutia@gmail.com

Gracious Father, whose blessed Son Jesus Christ came down from heaven to be the true bread which gives life to the world: Evermore give us this bread, **that he may live in us, and we in him**; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

From now on, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. **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.

[Gospel: Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32 \(Parable of “Prodigal Son”\)](#)

1) INTRO

In 2nd reading, Paul writes to the Church in Corinth:

From now on, we regard no one from a human point of view...

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

Love this text!!!! Read commentary after commentary this week–HUNGRY for these words. I needed to hear them again and again. I needed them to be true.

What hooked me first was....

If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation:

NOT–If anyone is in Christ, THAT PERSON is a new creation; rather If **anyone** is in Christ, there is a new creation **everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!**

Family Systems Theory—you change one part, you change the whole. I find this helpful because it helps shift my focus.

It isn't up to me to change other people...or even to pray for God to change other people.

it isn't up to me to change the world, or even to pray for God to change the world.

It's up to me to remember that my life IS in Christ—and it's up to me to choose to return—again and again and again— to my true center, my true home, my true life IN Christ, where I can take root and grow and maybe even bear fruit, —-because (the text tells us) if anyone is in Christ, there IS a NEW CREATION. Somehow, by the mysterious power of the God of Life, if anyone is in Christ—when we are in Christ—The World DOES change. The world IS made new. Other people DO change. Other people ARE made new. And yes, WE also change. We also are made new.

In Today's Opening Collect we prayed: Gracious Father, whose blessed Son Jesus Christ came down from heaven to be the true bread which gives life to the world: Evermore give us this bread, **that he may live in us, and we in him**; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Paul writes: **If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation.**

In Baptism we are incorporated into Christ's Body. In Eucharist Christ's Body is incorporated into us. How do we more deeply claim and dwell in this reality that is already accomplished?

The second part that caught my attention...

RECONCILIATION:

....All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation

Conflict in life/ministry/household

Recent attempts at reconciliation have Failed spectacularly....

EXTREMELY DISTRESSING AND PAINFUL.

At a loss about how we are to embody the “ministry of reconciliation” with which God has entrusted.

FIRST CLUE: See above— If **anyone** is in Christ, there is a new creation:

Can't change or control other people—not by prayer, or skill, or effort , or sleepless nights (although perhaps with enough prayer and effort, empowered by the infinite grace of God— it may be possible to find our own life more deeply rooted and growing in Christ, and thereby it is possible that we ourselves may be changed in ways that enable the birth of the “New Creation” God promises

SECOND CLUE : See below—From now on, we regard no one from a **human point of view...**

HUMAN POINT OF VIEW:

From now on, we regard no one from a human point of view...

What is a **human point of view**?

Partial; Limited; Incomplete

Constrained by both our experience AND our lack of experience

Past experience can both teach us AND blind us—it can expand our awareness, but (especially in the case of trauma) it can constrict and constrain the responses available to us

Constrained by both our experience AND our lack of experience

Constrained by natural human limitations—necessarily limited capacity of our minds, our knowledge, our bodies, our hearts, our energy

Constrained by the mighty power of—what some might call “ego” or even that old fashioned church word—sin.

MY LIMITATION—Enneagram 1=achilles heel is ”Being Right”

Example: Ministry Conflict

Sara Miles: *You’re right, Sylvia. Of course you’re right. But you can still love people, even when they’re wrong.*

Paul writes: **From now on, we regard no one from a human point of view...**

ALTERNATIVE? God's point of view

If our human point of view is limited

God's point of view is, by definition, Unlimited.

God's point of view is nothing more, and nothing less, than the perfect and eternal love that gives birth to all and encompasses all.

God takes the puny, inadequate human equations by which we try calculate "right-ness" and pours God's own righteousness, that is LOVE, into them until they burst open.

Jesus says in the Gospel of Matthew, ***Go and learn what this means, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice."*** Jesus, himself, is proof that, in God's New Creation, Love takes precedence over justice; God's mercy takes precedence over "human righteousness" 100%.

God is obviously right. 100% right. 100% of the time. But the literal whole point of Jesus, the whole point of the Gospel, the whole point of Christianity God doesn't allow God's "right-ness" to become an impediment to God's relationship with us. God overcomes the distance between us, not with "right-ness", but with love.

Today's Gospel—I didn't want to preach on it.

Until I began to wonder if TODAY'S EPISTLE offered such a helpful perspective on my own life struggles, maybe Today's Epistle could offer a new perspective on today's (so called) Parable of the Prodigal Son.

From now on, we regard no one from a human point of view...

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I wonder what a "New Creation" might look like in the Parable Jesus tells about the Father and 2 Sons.

What if we identify ourselves with the FATHER (rather than one of the sons?)

Father's response to younger son=human point of view

HURT (Hurt becomes ANGER)---Totally justified

Father—Nursing Hurt, Nursing Anger, Worry about son—trying to calculate a plan to support him without enabling him—control

Moment he sees Son on the horizon—Reasonable, just, merciful response—might be to accept him back as a hired hand.

But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him.

Throws Reason, Justice, "Righteousness" and "Rightness" to the wind—and runs out to embrace the son. Love wins.

If anyone is in Christ, there is a new Creation...

Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

The Father's change made room for the younger son's repentance...

The Father's love enables the younger son to repent...And the son's acceptance of the Father's love makes a celebration possible!

So the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe--the best one--and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

"Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.'

A New Creation has been born...A Celebration is already underway...The Older Brother can hear it. But at first he can't believe it. He can't understand it. He can't let go of the Old Creation, as painful and unsatisfactory as it might be.

The Older Brother became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!'

Older Brother is firmly planted in territory I know only too well—the territory of ego, the territory of reason, of justice, of righteousness and self-righteousness, the territory of pain, and anger, and grief, and disappointment. The Older Brother is stuck, at least for a moment, regarding everyone—his father, his brother, himself—”from a human point of view.”

Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.'

And that is where the Parable ends. He doesn't tell us what happens next. He doesn't tell us what the older brother decides to do. All we know is that the celebration is underway. The door is open. There is already a place set at the Banquet Table for the Older Brother to join in the celebration whenever he is ready.

If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

I wonder where you are in the Parable today?

Are you the Father? Have you been given the opportunity to embrace and forgive?

Are you the Younger son? Have you been given the opportunity to return and repent? The opportunity to accept the embrace and forgiveness that have been offered?

Are you the Older son? Have you been given the gift of an open door and an invitation to join in a celebration, even if doing so will mean the grief of letting go of the “old world” you knew, and your old ideas about what is fair, what is right, what is good, and what is possible?

2) CONCLUSION

Friends, hear the promise and possibilities in these words—and let them become a doorway into the Celebration that is already underway—the Life of Love and Reconciliation and Unity that is God’s will for you, and for all God’s children:

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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

Amen.