

IN THE BEGINNING GOD
2 CORINTHIANS 5:4-19
JOHN 1:1-13

Good morning to you! I hope you are doing well in this cold but sunny morning. And I can not believe it is already the middle of January. Where is time going? It seems that I get up go to work, come home and another day passes.

It is a privilege to be sharing this time with you this morning. ‘We’ve gathered together to worship the Lord.

Let us have a Word of prayer: As we gather together in your name, we pray that you bless our time together. We pray that your Holy Spirit speaks to us and meet us where we need to be met. Open our minds and hearts to you. I pray that you would “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer” (Psalm 19:14 NRSV), Amen.

Many people make resolutions every year. Normally, the idea is to improve something in our lives. If we have been inactive, many would make a resolution to get off the couch and start exercising. Others make a resolution to go back to school, or maybe to switch jobs, or start a new hobby or save more money or start saving money. Ideally, we want to stop bad habits and start new good ones. For some the resolution would be to read the Bible more, to study it more, or dedicate more time to prayer. Some people are good at sticking with the resolution and make the changes they resolved to make in the beginning of the year. Most of us are not that way. We end up giving up on the resolution before it had a chance to become a new habit and see some of the fruit of the new habit or resolution.

IN THE BEGINNING GOD
2 CORINTHIANS 5:4-19
JOHN 1:1-13

The apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians tells them “...whether we are at home [in the body], or away, we make it our aim to please [God]” (2 Cor. 5:9). We are in the body now. We are here. There are those who have preceded us and are no longer here, they are away from us but at home and present with the Lord.

But we are here now, and perhaps one of the resolutions we can make at the beginning of every day is to aim at pleasing God one day at a time. In Christ we are a new creation, the old is passed away, all things are new (2 Cor. 5:17). (I know I am preaching to a group of very mature group of Christians). We probably resolve to do this every day. I just hope this will serve as an encouragement to all of us to continue doing so.

God is in the beginning of everything. John 1 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being”. For John “the Word” is Jesus. Without the Word nothing that we can observe or not observe, everything that exists, whether we are aware of it or not, came into existence.

John continues, “what was coming into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.”

This Word is the creator of life and life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness

IN THE BEGINNING GOD
2 CORINTHIANS 5:4-19
JOHN 1:1-13

did not overcome it. No matter how dim, a light is never overcome by darkness.

In Guatemala, close to where I grew up there is a lake inside the crater of a volcano. The water in the lake is used to irrigate the fields around the volcano in the valley. When they were building the tunnel from which water would flow out of the lake and into the irrigation system, we went there for a church picnic. And we went through the tunnel still under construction. And it was long and narrow. We couldn't see what was around us for a while, but I remember my dad telling us, just looks straight ahead towards the end of the tunnel. And we did and eventually we came out the other end and what a beautiful view of the lake we had.

Life is light to the world. The dead or the not born yet, can't appreciate life and light. And what a gift life is! And it is a gift that we hold for only a time here on earth. But for the Christian, for us who have a hope, we know that when we depart this dwelling, we go home and are present with the Lord. And Paul was conflicted, he wasn't sure what he wanted more. But either way, he says, his aim was to please the Lord.

The word became flesh and dwelled among people. And thank God for the incarnation! Humanity had fallen far from the Lord in sin. But God, in Christ became flesh and dwelled among us.

At this early part of this new year, let us remember what Paul tells to the Corinthians, speaking of his ministry and and as an invitation to the Corinthians, "For the love of Christ

IN THE BEGINNING GOD
2 CORINTHIANS 5:4-19
JOHN 1:1-13

urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them” (Cor 5:14-15).

Paul invites the Corinthians to live for him instead of living for themselves. But what does it mean to live for him? Is this possible? Paul writes that very familiar verse that many times we just read and before we finish reading, we already know what it says and our mind starts moving to the next verse, then the next and the next, so on and on.

Let us stop and ponder a little bit on it: “If anyone is in Christ, new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new”. Do we grasp the depth of this verse?

The old is our old ways of doing things, when we were acting according to the ways of a world that doesn't know Christ. We were all for ourselves. The individual against everyone and everyone against the individual where you have pull yourself up by your boot straps. By the way, this is an impossibility. The rugged individuallism where every effort is made to accumulate wealth and power no matter what. While this may work for a few, it doesn't work for most of us.

Paul says the old things have passed away, see, everything is become new.

It means living according to the incarnate Word of God, Jesus. His life as an example to imitate, his attitude and acts in favor of the poor, sick, orphan, widow and oppressed. In the

IN THE BEGINNING GOD
2 CORINTHIANS 5:4-19
JOHN 1:1-13

Gospel of Luke, 4:17b, Jesus, reading from Isaiah 61, says, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor and he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and in verse 21 Jesus says, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” Let’s imitate the life of Jesus and teachings. He gave himself for others.

Jesus proclaimed that he is the light of the world. John wrote these words that Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” Jesus gives his followers his light and we must reflect that light into a world that is lost. The life of Jesus is our life and our light. We can do nothing without it.

The Word was before anything existed and everything that exists is because of him. And God has given us creativity so that just like he is the creator of all things, we may use the creativity that he has given us to be a light in darkness.

We create things with our bodies and with our minds:

If you are a gardener, your creative mind, using your hands, your arms can plant flowers, arrange stones, plant diverse flower seeds and plants and overtime, you would have a beautiful garden. Use the garden to shine light into a world that doesn’t know God.

Everyone can do something in Jesus that shines a light into the world:

IN THE BEGINNING GOD
2 CORINTHIANS 5:4-19
JOHN 1:1-13

The song writer can write songs that invite us to join in praise to God

The Poet can write poetry that glorifies the Lord and blesses people. There is so much poetry in the Bible.

The laborer, who works in the fields, unappreciated as they can be, use their hands, eyes, feet, legs, arms to plant and harvest fruits and vegetables. Have you thanked a laborer lately?

The farmer

The accountant

The nurse

The doctor

The airline pilot

The teacher

The delivery truck driver and we could go on and on.

In our mundane, everyday life, we can live this new creation in Christ.

Paul reminds the Corinthians that we will one day, stand before the judgement seat of Christ and be recompensed according to what has been done in the body, whether be good or evil. God deserves our most fearful reverence. One day all of us will be stand in the presence of the Lord.

But we must rejoice in this instead of having fear. In Christ we have been made new creation. So, we walk by faith

IN THE BEGINNING GOD
2 CORINTHIANS 5:4-19
JOHN 1:1-13

and not by sight. The one in which we have been created anew is faithful. We believe in him in our daily living as we continue to live in Christ and it is in practical, mundane, everyday things that we live it out.

Let's take our newness in Christ, this new way of living and thinking and grow in this new life. Let us grow in such a way that the light that Jesus reflects in us is brighter and brighter every day. As ambassadors of Christ, we represent him in a world that is corrupted by sin.

John says that "to all that receive him, who believe in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of humankind, but of God".

This is beautiful and amazing and we should praise his name for this. We don't need to live in fear of tomorrow or of standing before the judgement seat of God because we know that in Christ, we can live a life that is pleasing to him. God is faithful! Paul writes, "the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who died and was raised for them". In Romans 5:8, Paul writes, "But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us".

God has done all that God can to reach out to us and make us anew. Including sending his Son Jesus, the Word that became flesh. What else could God have done for us? He has shown his love over and over to us.

IN THE BEGINNING GOD
2 CORINTHIANS 5:4-19
JOHN 1:1-13

Paul, speaking of the new creation and of living the new life in Christ, says that “all this is from God, who reconciled us to himself in 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”.

The message of reconciliation and a new life is the message that we have for a sinful world. This is the light that we must project to a sinful world. Let us live free from the oppressing power of sin. Do we sin from time to time? Yes. But we don't have to stay in sin, God gives us a new life everyday in Christ.

You know, in the beginning I spoke of resolutions and all that. Let's talk about resolutions again. Let's make this resolution everyday. Not as check list, but as something that we do because we are now living the new life in Christ and this resolution gets integrated into our daily living. We aim to live a life that seeks to please God.

As personas created anew, may this new life, this new light shine over our walk as we continue to move towards him and in showing us what are the systemic sins we may be supporting. Let us see what personal sins we are committing and how that may be causing others not to see the light of God in Christ in us and through us, and let us repent, turn around and seek forgiveness.

We can learn from the prayer in Psalms 139:23 “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my

IN THE BEGINNING GOD
2 CORINTHIANS 5:4-19
JOHN 1:1-13

thought. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting”.

What if we prayed that prayer often? I think it would be one of the ways we can integrate Scripture into our daily living and from there God can lead us to other passages that would help us to continue to grow in the light of Christ.

In the end, we make resolutions that we think will improve our lives spiritually, physically, and in our relationships.

In our new life in Christ, let us aim to first please God in everything we say and do.

May this be so!