

**Calvary, Americus**  
**JUNE 20, 2021**  
**The Fourth Sunday after Pentecost**

The portion of Paul's letter to the Corinthians read this morning is one of the great passages of scripture.

Instead of human characteristics and human evaluations, Paul's frame of reference for seeing human beings is "in Christ." This change of orientation Paul calls a "new creation."

Because of Christ's death and Resurrection, Christians must go beyond previous standards of judgment. Christ has made us new.

Life in Christ is all-inclusive, all transforming. Old things of life which were sinful pass away when one comes into fellowship with Christ. New things take their place. One is said to be a new creation.

But so often in our experience of life, that does not seem to be the case. There is that persistent and nagging phrase that seems to sum up so much of our lives. "We need to reconcile ourselves to the fact..." All of us know what follows when someone starts his speech with that phrase. Often it is the prelude to a series of reasons why we cannot do something.

Reconciliation is, among other things, an act of bringing expectations into conformity with reality. We also know, however, that reality is sometimes what we make it to be.

If one reconciles oneself to the "reality" of being non-athletic, or handicapped, or unmusical, or unlovable, it could be a serious mistake. Hard work, positive thinking, and patience can sometimes change present reality into a much different future.

Paul's words to the Corinthians about reconciliation shed startling light upon our human experience of reality when we have to decide to conform to the present age or to try to change it.

First, says Paul, the deepest reality is that all things have been reconciled to God in Christ. And this does not mean that God has reconciled to himself the fact that the world is messed up forever with sin, hatred, and conflict. To the contrary, God's reconciliation of the world through Christ is an act of radical change. He is making all things new, washing sin away.

If we intend to take God seriously, then we must be reconciled to this new reality; we may not accept brokenness, animosity, and war as if they were the final reality. Not in our world, not in our community, not in our personal lives.

Secondly, reconciliation of all things in Christ means that God has put us in a new position. Whoever is "in Christ" is a "new creation; the old has gone, the new has come." The issue is not whether we have the personal courage to dream big dreams or "think positively" about changing our lives. Rather the question is "Will you accept the fact that you have already been made new in Christ?"

Reconciling ourselves to reality means, for Christians, reconciling ourselves to the fact that God is changing us and everything else.

This new reality to which we must be reconciled requires action! God's reconciling work in Christ demands more than the framing of a new mental image until Christ returns. God, "who reconciled us to himself through Christ," has now given us "the ministry of reconciliation."

We are committed to this in our Baptism, as individuals and as members of the Christian community. All the promises that we make are binding us to this task of reconciliation. Reconciling ourselves to reach others in the faith community through the visible signs of teaching, fellowship, and corporate worship; binding ourselves to Christ and God through repentance; binding ourselves to the world as God's new creation in Christ through our commitment to serve others and to seek justice and peace.

We are called to be the righteous of God among our neighbors. We may not reconcile ourselves to a broken situation. To talk like this is not foolish idealism; it is a matter of reconciling ourselves to reality as it is lived in the good news of Christ.

Too often, as Church, we become custodians of the old. "Behold, I make all things new," says the Lord, but somehow, we have the notion that our mission in life is to be conservators of past structures. The scriptures call us to a new covenant, new spirit, new heart, new creation, a new being, new heaven, new earth, new life, new wine, new wineskins, but so often we are wary of the new and want no part of it.

Jesus calls his followers to a new paradigm of living: "Love your enemies, do good to those that hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you." At the center of this understanding is Christ on the cross with his arms outstretched in the ultimate act of reconciliation.

God's love grants us the capacity to dream of a time when people will have enough to eat. It grants us the strength to imagine a day when the dignity of each person is respected. It grants us the hope that one day all the shackles that hold people in bondage will be broken. **And it equips us to work to achieve these dreams.**

The world needs Christ's Church...that's us, this community here at Calvary, to commit itself to this new paradigm of love and reconciliation. Jesus had a passion for the poor; we are called to that same passion. Let us commit ourselves to live in the imagination of God's reconciling love.