

When dramatic change happens in life, a new way of living goes with it. This is true in so many stages of life. It is true when a couple have their first baby. A whole new chapter opens in their lives, and their life will not be the same again. They have new responsibilities and new perspectives. It is true when people who have lived in poverty move into a new home that Habitat builds for them. Life with decent plumbing and dependable heat. Life is readjusted to the good. It is so true when people move from one country to another. A new language needs to be learned. New laws apply. If you speak the old language, and by the old ways, you won't fit in. You won't know what's really happening. Change is around you, and you must change with it.

In these two verses, Paul appeals to the Corinthian Christians to see the world with new eyes, the eyes of the Gospel--that Jesus Christ is Lord. He is saying you must change your way of thinking about yourself and others and the world and view it from the perspective of the difference the rule of Jesus Christ makes. In Colossians 3:1-2, he puts it this way: *"If you have been raised with Christ... set your minds on things that are above, where Christ is, not on the things of earth..."* THINK, CONSIDER, DRAW OUT the meaning of your lives in light of the reigning Christ Jesus. In Romans 12:2, *"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God--what is good, and acceptable and perfect."*

Paul calls upon us to think out the implications of the Gospel that Jesus Christ is Lord. What does it all mean, especially as it pertains to how we view things? It means we have to take seriously the fact that Jesus has changed, not just us, but

EVERYTHING!

And he says this with this sweeping viewpoint: *“From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view,”* or literally, *“according to the flesh,”* by which he means our old, sinful, human nature--that’s the *“human point of view.”*

So why does he say this? Because of what he just said in vss. 14-15: *“For 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, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who has died and was raised for them.”* In other words, it’s the reality of the crucified and now Risen/Reigning Jesus Christ that makes the difference. A new world--a new reality in the midst of our world--has broken in. It began when God raised Jesus from the dead. That began the New Creation of all things--and we are now are part of it. When Paul looks at himself, others, other Christians--everyone--he sees them in a new way--the way of Jesus, and Jesus as Lord--the Jesus who died and was raised for all of us.

So when Paul says, *“we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way,”* (vs.16b), he means there was a time, before Paul became a Christian, that he hoped for the Messiah/Christ in a purely human manner--a Messiah who would conquer Israel’s enemies in the world--the Romans, and all other pagan peoples--build a pure temple of God, and establish a purely human kingdom. They were his dreams. But such dreams--his and ours--have come to dust. That’s what Christ’s death and resurrection have taught him--something far greater and far reaching. And, marvel of marvels, the way to the truth and to God’s kingdom is through death--Christ’s death and death to ourselves--and out the other side into God’s New world and new

reality.

So, you put together what he's learned about other people and what he's learned about Christ, and what do you get? You get one of the great summaries of what Christianity is all about. More comprehensive than even John 3:16! Literally, it's "*if anyone in Christ, there--new creation!!*" BAM! The New Creation refers both to the person concerned and the New World which they enter, the world reconciled to God and being remade through his Son. Hear it: "*If anyone is in Christ, there is new creation; every-thing has become new!*" BAM! That's the great plan. Not heaven, but New Creation in which heaven and earth come together and life in God's kingdom on earth (Eph 1:10).

Paul's use of the language of creation from Genesis is striking in this letter. He speaks of unbelievers as blind and so "*in darkness*" like the primal darkness in the first verses of Genesis 1, "*dark and void,*" (Gen 1:2). Then, just as God spoke and there was light (vs.3), so too God now speaks the gospel-word and once again there is light, the light of the gospel of the glory of God shone in our hearts (2 Cor 4:4-6). As by the agency of the word of God the world was made, so now, by the word of God--the message of reconciliation of which Christ is the Center and Lord--people and the whole world are being remade. Thus, there is not only a New Covenant--as he said in 2 Cor 3--but there is a New Creation--the old is gone, the new has come. It's started, it's begun, and it will be completed. And with our union and faith in Christ Jesus, God reserves us a body "*not made with hands,*" (5:1) in the heavens for our inheritance. Then, when the fullness of the New Creation is achieved, we will be presented with that immortal body fit for the New World and our place in it.

Through Jesus Christ--incarnate, living, dying, raised and ascended--God is claiming back his own created world, reconciling to himself all of us, his beautiful and beloved creation, after long years of corruption, decay, and death. This is what God is up to. And how has he implemented this plan for us? Through Jesus his Son and Christ. Paul will go on explain this in few verses to follow (18-21). Like a composer who writes a great symphony, for it to be played, all the parts must be handed out to everyone in the orchestra. Everyone gets their part. Well, God's great symphony of reconciliation was composed at Calvary and the empty tomb--all of the Christ event really--and now the parts are being copied and handed out to us all. We are all given the ministry of reconciliation, as he says (vss.18-20). As Luther said, "*We are to be little Christ's to one another.*" Or as Paul put it, "*that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who has died and was raised for them.*"

You may say, when we are Christian, we have a new center. Our ways give way to his ways. Our dreams give way to his much greater plans. This is what it is to "*die to self*" and "*live to Christ.*" Our ego-centricity gives way to his Christo-centricity. Yet, and here's the thing, we must have to want it. We have to seek it. It doesn't come easily. That's why we pray prayers of confession and renewal, as we do. It's why we ask God's forgiveness for our debts, and must forgive the debts of others. The New Creation has begun, but like medicine to an illness, it takes its time working its full measure of healing.

Now, to go back for a moment, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is Lord confronts us in our own expectations and desires. Do we want him to really be Lord? Do we want him to take our dreams and do with them as he chooses? Do we want Christ the Lord to put

into us his desires for our lives, as opposed to simply the ones we formulate? Do we want our knowledge of Christ to grow in ways that conform us to himself, as opposed to the ways we know, often prefer, and hold on to of this present life? And if we are willing to consider Christ *“no longer from a human point of view,”* are we equally willing to take up the task of *“no longer considering others from [our own] human point of view,”* meaning our own views, our own judgments upon others, our own decisions about the goodness and acceptability to us of others regardless of who they are, where they come from, what their color, or anything else that makes them different from ourselves? As John says, *“How can we love God, whom we have not seen, if we do not love our brother who we have seen?”* (1 Jn 4:20). The two come together. Love of God, love of neighbor. That is what it is to live in the New Creation--and to regard neither Christ nor others *“from a human point of view.”* Hence, *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male and female; for all are one in Christ Jesus,”* (Gal 3:28). For Jesus said, *“For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother,”* (Mt 12:46).

Jesus himself signaled this new age of living when he said to his critics, *“You judge after the flesh* (human point of view--Paul’s phrase); *I judge no one,”* (John 8:15). So realize who you are in Christ, of what now you are a part--New Creation in Christ--and live here by Christ. Strive to live the reality, *“one died for all, therefore all have died,”* (vs. 14), that every person we deal with is one for whom Christ identified, for whom he died, whom he loves. *“Put off the old, and put on the new,”* as Paul says in Ephesians 4:22-24, knowing as Paul also says, *“We are [God’s] workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared for us to be our way of life,”* (2:10).

Isn't that a great joy? Isn't that a great relief? God judges others. We get about the business of loving others with the love of Christ. So as we come to the Table today, let us remember the words of Him, who looks at each of us with hope and promise, who died and was raised for us, who says, "*The old things are passed away. Behold, I make all things new!*" (Rev 21:4-5). "*I am making you new!*" Take the bread and cup today and say to Jesus, "*I want your life in me. I want your ways to show through me. I want you above all as my life.*" Amen.