

TEXT: 2 Corinthians 5:14-17

THEME: **NEW FOUND LIFE—PASS IT ON**

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! (2 Cor 5:14-18) NIV

Dear Friends in Christ:

People crave new things: new phones, new cars, new clothes, new hairstyles, even a new face. People go for plastic surgery to get a new nose, a new ear, a new body, a new look. If we could change everything, we would.

But we cannot change us! I can change my clothes, but it's still me. I can change my hairstyle...okay, I can change my hat, but it's still me. I carry with me the same old fears, handicaps, and worries, the same miseries and sadness. No amount of new gadgets, clothes, or things can really give me what my heart longs for.

Why? Because what we need are not new things, but a new life. We can have many new things—new job, new car, new clothes, new spouse—but we cannot have a new life without Christ Jesus. We cannot have real hope, joy, love, and peace without Christ Jesus. If you want to be truly happy in this life—and in the life to come—then get to know your Savior Jesus more.

Listen to what Jesus says, **“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10)**. Doesn't that sound awesome—life to the full! Yet, I'm already living. Why give me life? Obviously, it is not just about living—we can be living without a life, without meaning and purpose, without knowing what we are living for. Here Jesus is talking about an abundant life, a full life, a life that lasts forever. Jesus prayed to his Father for us, **“Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (John 17:3)**. Jesus Christ was sent to live a perfect life for us, to die our death to pay for all our sins, and to rise from the dead to assure us that through Spirit-worked faith in him we have eternal life.

Well, sure, we all want eternal life...someday. But what about life right now? Is it really so bad? We've made some great improvements over the centuries. We've made great strides in education, medicine, science, and technology. Yet life on this earth is not really better. We live with the same old fears and worries...and probably more and new ones. We worry about not having enough, of being diagnosed with cancer, of relationship problems. We have more broken families, more suicides, more violence. We have anti-terrorism drills. Life has not improved. Why? Because human beings have fallen farther and farther away from God.

So, if you want a really good life—now and forever—come to Jesus or get back to Jesus. Talk to him and let him talk to you through his Word, the Bible. Hang out with followers of Jesus who will help you stay close to Jesus and grow in your faith. Through his Word, Jesus will create a new life for you. As Paul wrote in our reading for today, **“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Cor 5:17).**

That transformation in us reminds me of our new soccer field. For years that property was an eyesore with an old bank building, cracking parking lot, and weeds growing everywhere. Vandals had knocked out the windows and graffiti covered the walls. When we were thinking about buying it, someone asked what in the world we wanted that old building for. We didn’t want the building; we wanted the property...for a whole new purpose, a soccer field and playground.

That is what the Lord has done with us. He wants us to be his own and he purchased us with the blood of his own Son, Jesus, who died on the cross for us. But he doesn’t want our brokenness: our greed, lies, lust, and sin. So he did away with those through the perfect life, innocent death, and glorious resurrection of our Savior Jesus. Now, through Spirit-worked faith in Jesus, we are whole new creations. We are right with God. We love God. We want to do what he wants out of gratitude for the forgiveness of our sins, salvation, and eternal life in heaven. We have a new purpose in this life.

We don’t really NEED better gadgets, better things, or better programs. We NEED Jesus! We need to spend time with Jesus through his Word; we need to get to know Jesus better. As the writer to the Hebrews encourages us: **“Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25).** We NEED to be right here in church, not because God is lonely, but for our sake. We need to stay close to God.

Only when we are close to God will we enjoy the benefits and fulfill the responsibilities of our new life. Outside of church, you can only nurture your old life. You can only eat, drink, and be merry...and then die...and suffer eternal death in hell. But with God we have:

- ✘ HOPE—because the Lord guides us, not because of our wisdom and strength;
- ✘ JOY—because the Lord is with us, not because our earthly circumstances are good; and
- ✘ PEACE—because the Lord lives in our hearts, not because there is no trouble in our lives.

Dear friends, the Bible says we need to be reconciled with God, our Creator. The person who is in Christ, will experience newness of life! So put your trust in Jesus. Rely on Jesus. For thousands of years, people have been trying to do right and live right in an effort to please God. But the Bible says we’ve all sinned and fallen short of God’s glory. By ourselves we can never be good enough. No amount of change can truly improve our lives. No amount of education can give us a good life. We need a change of heart. We need the forgiveness of our sins. We need a new life. Only Jesus can do that. In Jesus, we have NEW FOUND LIFE. Now, PASS IT ON to others. Amen.