

TEXT: 2 Corinthians 5:17

THEME: GO “GREEN” WITH JESUS!

1. Reduce Sin to Zero
2. Reuse Jesus’ Righteousness
3. Recycle Your Life for Christ

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Dear Christian Friends:

These days it seems that everyone is wanting us to go “green,” to protect our environment, to stop being so wasteful of our natural resources. The auto industry is bringing out more and more hybrid cars and working toward fully electric cars in order to increase fuel efficiency and reduce pollution. I’m all for that. At the Detroit Auto Show this year I rode in an electric car and the quiet and smoothness were fantastic. But then I wonder...where is the electricity going to come from—coal, gas, oil, uranium? Citizens and industries get tax breaks for going “green,” for making heating and cooling more efficient and for reducing waste. That’s good. I took advantage of that last year and put some new windows in my house. But then we all have to pay more in taxes to make up for the government’s loss in revenue. It seems that there always is a trade-off for going green.

Yet the effort to go “green” seems to be a valid one, as long as it is accompanied by common sense. It is a good thing for all of us to be more aware of protecting our environment, to carefully and respectfully use the natural resources God has placed at our disposal. We need to be good managers of those resources. To help us do that, a clever little slogan has been around for quite a while now: REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE. In a throw-away world with such rapid advances that many items become obsolete the moment you take them out of the store, that little slogan—Reduce, Reuse, Recycle—is a good reminder.

Well, that slogan can be applied to our everyday lives in another way. Left to ourselves, our lives are truly a waste. By ourselves, we fill up our lives with the toxic waste of greed for more of everything, lust for sensual pleasures, and for power over our own destiny and fate. We want to be responsible to no one but ourselves. We don’t want to acknowledge God as our Creator, our Redeemer, or our Teacher, because we don’t want to live our lives according to his will. We don’t want to admit that there is nothing we can do to save ourselves. What a waste! And by ourselves we are all in the same boat. God’s Word tells us: **“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23)**. The result is a life that is wasted, **“for the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23)**.

But our God loves us. It broke his heart that we were separated from him by our sin, that the beautiful lives he created for us to enjoy with him were being wasted by our sin. We couldn’t do anything about it so God stepped in to give us an extreme makeover. Ty Pennington and his crew can do pretty amazing makeovers on houses on their TV show, but that’s nothing compared to what God has done for us through his Son, our Savior, Jesus. **“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever**

believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). So, through believing in God’s one and only Son, Jesus, we don’t perish, our life isn’t wasted, but we have eternal life and full, meaningful life on this earth. That’s going “green” to the extreme! That’s GOING “GREEN” WITH JESUS! And we can use the environmental slogan to help us remember that.

REDUCE SIN TO ZERO. Now, there is no way you and I are ever going to stop sinning—not this side of heaven. Even as Christians, we always have our sinful nature with us that continues to oppose God’s will for our lives every step of the way. We break God’s commandments every day with our thoughts, words, and actions. But Jesus was our substitute and lived a perfect life in our place—never sinning even once. Then Jesus died on the cross to pay for all our sins—a perfect life given into death to make full payment for all sins of all people. Through his love for us, God credits that perfect life and sacrifice of Jesus to us. In our second lesson today we heard **“that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them” (2 Corinthians 5:19).** Wow! Because God chooses to do so—not because of anything we have done or do—but because God chooses to do so, he has reduced our sin to zero. Every sin is completely paid for in full.

REUSE JESUS’ RIGHTEOUSNESS. God doesn’t see our lives as being full of the garbage and trash of sin. All he sees is perfection, through our faith in Jesus Christ as our one and only Savior. Now we can actually please God with our lives, the way we live our lives for him instead of selfishly for ourselves. We can do good works, not because we have to in order to be saved, but because we want to since we are already saved. God allows us to REUSE JESUS’ RIGHTEOUSNESS and he tells us so in our second lesson today: **“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21).** Think of that! As children of God through faith in Jesus, you and I are now **“the righteousness of God.”** We are right with God! We are good with God!

RECYCLE YOUR LIFE FOR CHRIST. Just as old plastic pop and water bottles can be recycled into luxurious car seats, so God has taken our wasted lives and recycled them into new lives that can be lived for him. God has taken our dry bones and breathed new life into them through his Son, our Savior Jesus. As our text says, **“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Corinthians 5:17).** We want to live that new life out of love and gratitude to God for the forgiveness of our sins, the eternal life that is waiting for us in heaven, and for the meaning and purpose God has given our lives on this earth.

My friends, is your life filled with the garbage of sin? Is bitterness eating away your joy and peace? Do things in your life make you unhappy? Is your life filled with pain, jealousy, and un-forgiveness? Is your life a selfish waste? Then know that there is hope for you right here today. God wants you to GO “GREEN” WITH JESUS. The Holy Spirit uses the means of grace—the gospel in the Word and Sacraments—to do that for you. The means of grace are offered here at Trinity each week in many ways. Your life doesn’t have to be a waste. We invite you and encourage you to study God’s Word with us, and let Jesus reduce your sin to zero, reuse his righteousness, and recycle your life for him in this life here on earth and forever in heaven. Amen.

Prayer of the Church—Pentecost 22C—Festival of Friendship

Lord and Savior, you have purchased us to be your own for all eternity. You took our lives that were wasted by sin and made us a new creation in you. You have reduced our sin to zero in the eyes of our heavenly Father. You allow us to reuse your righteousness as our own. You have recycled our lives so that in love and gratitude we may serve you. You have given purpose to our time in this life by making us your witnesses to lost sinners. We thank you for the high privilege of working with you to gather your elect into your kingdom.

Move us to look with compassion on the people around us who do not know you as their Savior. Fill us with zeal to do all that we can to bring them the precious gospel, so that they too may experience the joy of being your disciples. Enable us to be faithful witnesses to all whose lives we touch, whether it be in the privacy of our homes or in our communities.

We have learned to know you as a patient and merciful God. Renew us, restore us, and use us to proclaim your love by Word and deed to all people near and far. May many more rejoice with us, and we with them, when together we stand before your throne of glory.

We ask this in your most holy name, who has taught us to pray:

THE LORD'S PRAYER