**A.M.D.G. 6th After Epiphany – A Text: 2 Cor.5: 16-21**

 **February 12th, 2017 Colin Brown preaching**

*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. 17Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! 18All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.21God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

**God Never Stopped.**

God is creating, God never stopped. God first said “Let there be light… Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters… Let the waters under the sky be gathered together… And…Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed and fruit trees on earth (that) bear fruit…Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night… and… Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky. And God saw that it was good.” (Gen 1:1-24) On the sixth day God created all of us, on the seventh day God rested, but God’s last creation, all of us, have made sure that there hasn’t been much rest or peace since that seventh day. Like children with mild tempered parents, we ran wild. God’s own creation has suffered at our hands, suffered from our petulance as we see in the world around us. We have laid waste to the forests, fouled the air and polluted the waters: even the icecaps are melting. God has maintained God’s beautiful creation all the while. With every new sapling and reed God starts again to set right the creation that we have broken. But even more than this, Christ came to walk among us to restore our relationship with God and renew the world to eternal perfection. 。

From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through 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. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake, he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Here we have it straight from Paul, the cosmos has been recreated … only the forests are still clear-cut, the stream in the valley where I grew up still smells like a sewer and air quality alerts are still common around the world. Paul said that in Christ the world is remade and yet the world around me still seems the same in some very important ways.

Is Paul merely placating us, giving us a pleasant fiction to distract us from a difficult degraded and fallen world? I do not think that Paul was trying to calm the crowd of Christians while their broken world got even worse. I think that Paul was doing something that is very familiar to military members. He was repeating God’s warning orders.

In the military, warning orders are that last briefing, the last instructions you will get before you go on a mission. For months, there would have been briefings and meetings about every aspect of the impending mission. One fills out a mountain of paperwork, all the while it is impossible to imagine that your entire life will change in a few days. It is unimaginable until the day before you leave when you receive your warning orders. These orders state in every detail where you will report, the equipment and paperwork that you will bring. Every timing and every detail necessary for the mission to begin is included in the warning orders. Most of us walked home alone on these days with heads hung low and heavy hearts. In an instant, the mission became real, the sailor inhabits that new space, they leave their families already though they will not sail until the next day. This is the day that the wives and husbands of sailors burst in to tears merely upon seeing them

Verse 16 tells us that we now regard nothing from a human point of view, or that we have received our warning orders, that our world has changed, that we now inhabit a new space. The older translations of verse 16 read more like ‘now we regard no one against flesh or compared to flesh [[1]](#footnote-1).’ Flesh is a word we see often in the works of Paul and it always means more than just skin or in this case, it means more than human kind [[2]](#footnote-2). Paul equates the flesh with the fallen world, with sin and the physical degradation of the natural world,[[3]](#footnote-3) the same natural world that we have abused and polluted. The verse tells us that we knew Christ once in the same way we know our physical world but what happened to the physical body of Jesus. Humanity abused and degraded Jesus upon a cross at Calvary, as we abuse one-another and as we abuse God’s creation still. But Christ’s crucifixion was different, with his crucifixion we all received a new beginning. Christ was our warning order to live into a new reality, to live into a new creation. Everything old is as good as passed away. God is creating a new reality all around us, but more than this, God has given us the ministry of reconciliation. We are to be as ambassadors for Christ, reconciling all of creation to God. Paul wrote “…we entreat you on behalf of Christ, to be reconciled to God, (to be part of God’s new creation).”

God created the heavens and the earth, the plants producing seed and fruit, the oceans teaming with wife. With every new generation, with every sapling and new reed, God has continued to create and craft. God never stopped creating. Christ even came to walk among us to craft anew the relationship between God and man. We are God’s ambassadors, for Christ heralds of the new creation.

Christ brought with him a taste of the finest meal that God is preparing for us, Christ brought us our warning orders and our worlds are changed. God made Christ of flesh, made God of the same stuff as this broken and corrupted world so that all of creation could share in the resurrection, so that all the world could be re-made; every tree every blade of grass can share in Christ’s eternity. So, join me this week in living into this new creation, in going out into the world, trusting that as we do good works that is for God’s design, that it is for God’s new creation. It matters not if we plant a tree or help in feeding those in need. It matters not if we plant or if we water, God will make God’s new creation grow because God never stopped creating.

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)