

Unfortunately, we had some technical difficulties on Sunday and the sermon did not record. Below is the “spark notes” version of the message...

Bringing Renewal in Jesus’ Name

What does it mean to be “renewed”? We renew a lot of things in our daily lives but is this the same concept we’re looking at? For example, one can renew their driver’s license, marriage vows, or a library book. In each of these cases, the thing being renewed is made new or starts at the beginning again. Personally, I think about this concept of starting over again in the context of playing Mario as a kid. The modern version of Mario Brothers is much different than when I was growing up. Today, when your character dies you simply start over at the beginning of the level you were on. As a kid, Mario’s failure resulted in going back to the very beginning of the game...to start over...to begin afresh. Is this what we mean when we talk about renewal in Jesus’ Name?

The challenge with this line of thinking is that if we simply start at the beginning again, we are doomed to failure. Romans 3:23 tells us that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. If my renewal simply implies I get to start “the game” over again, I will undoubtedly follow the same path and my sin will separate me from God again and again.

Thankfully, I don’t believe this is the “renewal” we had in mind when we articulated our identity statement. In 2 Corinthians 5, Paul helps to clarify what this renewal looks like and what we should do with it.

2 Corinthians 5:17 - *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!*

The first question that is raised here is what does it mean to be “in” Christ? Paul explains...

Romans 6:4 - *We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*

When we believe in Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we get baptized as outward sign of our belief. In this process, we connect with Jesus’ death and resurrection and in Christ we have new life. Simply put, to be “in Christ” is to believe and belong to Him.

This is not only to knowing Him on a surface level but on a much more intimate level...to be “in” Him. As an illustration, I know very little about football. I didn’t watch it growing up and have only recently began to watch college football on Saturdays. I can explain the general concept of the game but not much more. In contrast, I have an 8 year old friend named Eli who is really in to football. He can tell you every quarterback of every team as well as their stats. If you had to say which of us is “in” to football and which of us simply knows about football, the answer is clear.

When we’re in Christ, when we believe and belong to Him, we are made new. The old is gone, the new is here. In the context of being renewed and starting over again, does “gone” equal reset? I don’t believe so. Other translations use “passed away” and “disappeared” in place of the word “gone.” These are not terms I think of when something may happen again but instead when something is truly and permanently gone. This is made clear when we compare it to what God tells us in the Old Testament...

Isaiah 43:18-19a - *Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See I am doing a new thing!*

In Christ, our past is wiped clean and something new, a new us, begins. And it's not like Mario where we simply start over again. Instead, renewal in Christ means the start of something different. It's a change, not a reset. Why? Because there's something more! In Christ, we are renewed, made new, AND we have the Holy Spirit to keep us on path. We can't travel down the same path when we start over because we are different...we're not the same person we once were. Jesus has made us a new creation and put His Spirit inside of us to help us and guide us in a new direction.

2 Corinthians 5:18a – *All this is from God! Who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation*

We did not do this, arrange this, or plan this! The offended party set out to reconcile the problem!

Think about it this way – if you were driving along and a teenager comes across the road and hits you with his car, totaling both vehicles, what would you do? Obviously, you would expect his insurance to replace your car. He was at fault and he needs to fix the problem. But what if the next day, you went out and, with your own money, bought yourself and him each a new car? None of us would ever do that! But this is what God does for us! We broke relation with Him because of our sin yet He is the one to reach out and reconcile, fix, our mistake. Paul explains that God, through Christ, reconciles with us. He restores our relationship and He also gives us the “ministry of reconciliation.”

2 Corinthians 5:19 - *that 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.*

Here again, Paul recaps that it is God who is fixing the problem...making us new...and wiping our slates clean. We don't have to dwell on our past mistakes! God has wiped them clean and has forgotten them. And in the midst of forgiving us, “He has committed to us the message of reconciliation.” God has given us this ministry. He has given us a job to do! Paul further defines this responsibility...

2 Corinthians 5:20-21 - *We 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. 21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

Because of what Jesus has done, we are made new. This comes with an additional status of being an ambassador! As believers in Christ, our home is in Heaven. We are strangers in this world. And as such we are called to be Christ's ambassadors. We have been given His message to share with the world - “Be reconciled to God”!

As believers in Christ, are we representing our King? Are we serving as God's mouthpiece in the world we live in? We have a great message of joy, love, and forgiveness to carry forth! As we receive renewal in Jesus' Name, we also need to carry this message of reconciliation and renewal to the world!