A New Year & A New Resolution
(1/1/17)

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2 Corinthians 5-13-17

For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. [14]For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. [15]And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them. 16 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. [17]So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

1. New Year's Resolutions

When a new year starts, many people have new year's resolutions. According to the Marist poll, the top resolution for 2017 is being a better person, 16%, weight loss, 10%, exercising more, 10%, spending less money and saving more, improving one's health, and eating healthier receive 7% each. What are your new year's resolutions? My resolution for 2017 is what Paul says to the Corinthians. Paul says, **"if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!"** I want to be a new human being.

I am always interested in new products. I get excited when I see and use new computers, cameras, and smartphones. I am also curious when I read about new cars and robots in the news. This year there will be many new products which will surprise us. It is reported that we will see new medicines and medical treatment technologies this year. According to the NIV, we are told, "**if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.**" Paul asserts that every human being can be a new creation. When we look closely at this statement, this is actually a very radical statement. You may have heard the saying that people never change. However, Paul says as long as we are in Christ, we can and are new creations.

How can a person be a new creation? In 2 Cor. 4:16 Paul says, "**Though outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day" (NASB).** Physically, humans grow older and weaker. We all can attest to this on one way or another. But spiritually, we can experience the renewing work of the

Holy Spirit every day. Paul actually says we are being renewed constantly. The inner transformation is in this sense, a constant process.

Think about the lives of Jesus' disciples. According to Mark 9:33, when they came to Capernaum, Jesus asks them, "**What were you arguing about on the road?**" Mark says in verse 34 that "**they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest**." They were scared, petty, and immature in many ways. However, after Jesus' resurrection, the disciples devoted their lives to preaching the good news of Jesus until they were martyred. These immature disciples changed and became amazing men of God.

2. In Christ

How was this transformation possible? The first thing that allowed for this to change was the resurrection of Jesus, and the second was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Paul says, we can be a new creation when we are in Christ. What does Paul mean by "**in Christ**"? The Greek word "En" can be translated "**in, by, with, among, at, on and through**." For me "with" in English is a better translation. So "**if we are with Christ, we can be a new creation**." When we are connected and living every day in Christ, we become a constantly new creation.

Last week, we celebrated the birth of Jesus. Many people came to the Christmas Eve service. But one question that some people may have had coming from the service was where is Jesus? How can I meet him? And how can I have a real relationship with him? The truth is that Jesus is always with us through the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God. And when we need or want to talk to Him, we need to be sensitive to listen for Him and what he is saying.

3. Accomplishment of New Year's Resolutions

When it comes to resolutions, why do you think many people have a hard time accomplishing their resolutions? I think it's because many people try to do it by themselves. Often times these goals are a lot easier when you have someone helping you. What about Christians' cases? Christians are those who believe that Jesus is the Lord and their savior. If that is the case, Christians should be quite different from non-Christians. But in reality, there seems to be little difference between Christians and non-Christians. This happens when Christians, including ourselves, forget that believing in Jesus means we are supported and led by our Lord and Savior. From the small daily tasks, to the big plans and goals in our

lives, everything belongs and needs to be done with God in the driver's seat of our lives.

When Jesus is our Lord, we just need to follow him. We try to be like him. We try to act like him. God created us in his image, and every person is built to be like Jesus. He gave us life, and our lives are built to be like him.

Paul in Acts 20:23-24 says, "**I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me--the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace**." For many people Paul was crazy. He did not care about himself, but only wanted to follow Jesus and serve the people of God. It seems extreme, but that life is the life that each and everyone of us is built to live. There can be anxieties, doubts, and fears in life. But God has built us to not only be with him and in him in every situation, but to also be his hands and feet in this world.

4. The ministry of Reconciliation

From 2 Corinthians 5:18 and following, Paul talks about the ministry of reconciliation. Paul talks about the reconciliation between the Jews and the Gentiles. The Jewish Christians thought the Gentiles had nothing to do with the death of Jesus. But Paul believed that Jesus had died for the Gentiles too. That's why he had done everything to reach out to the Gentiles.

In the 19th century, Methodist churches were concerned about foreign missions. In 1885, the first Methodist missionaries came to Korea. Henry Appenzeller and his wife were the first missionary couple sent from New Jersey to Korea. They were normal people who followed God's leading to Korea. Through their love and their lives living 100% with God, the entire history and direction of Korea changed. Today thousands of missionaries leave Korea to share the Gospel and love of Christ with others. And through people like Mr. and Mrs. Appenzeller, I also heard about Jesus and my life was changed, bringing me from Korea to minister and serve the people in our community here in Sagamore Beach.

In February, I am planning to visit Guatemala from Feb. 28 through March 7 for a week. A United Methodist pastor who is also a medical doctor is serving the people there as a missionary. I am looking for someone who is willing to go with

me to see what God is doing through God's people in Guatemala. I pray that our church continues to reach out to the people in our community, but also to do the ministry of reconciliation in the places of need like Guatemala. Paul says that "**we are Christ's ambassadors**" (2 Cor. 5:20). Don't you want to be Christ's ambassadors?

5. Conclusion

God has given us this new year and empowered us with his Holy Spirit. I believe that God has a plan for each one of us for 2017. And like Appenzeller, we may be just normal people. But with open hearts and minds, and a life set to live every minute with Jesus, we may just change the world and expand God's love to the very ends of the earth.

6. Application

We are all new creations when we are in Christ Jesus. Even when we feel too old to start a new thing, God reminds us that our biblical forefathers were called and followed God to change the world even in their old age. The best role model for me is Moses. He went to Egypt to deliver the people of Israel from slavery at the age of 80 and led them for 40 years. Deut. 34:7 says, "**Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died, yet his eyes were not weak nor his strength gone**." God was with Moses always and used him to achieve God's dream. I pray that God gives us a new vision, energy and wisdom to live with the Lord always and to be new creations to fulfill God's purpose for 2017. Amen. Let us pray.