

The New You

God is ALWAYS creating new worlds for us to enjoy and tame so that no matter our age or situation, God keeps us invested in life.

2 Corinthians 5.17-6.2

17So if anyone is **in Christ, there is a new creation**: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! 18**All this is from God**, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; 19that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. 20So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

6As we work together with him, **we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain**. 2For he says, “At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you.” See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation!

Nearly thirty-nine years ago, I climbed into this pulpit for the first time and read the lesson we’ve just heard and preached a sermon I called, “The New You”! A lot of water has gone over the dam since that Sunday in October of 1982. In fact, some of you weren’t even born! Yet all of us were in a different place. The farm crisis was threatening and beginning to rear its head. We were facing some threatening times and our world needed the promise of fresh starts and new beginnings. Those difficult days forced us to grow up in ways we never intended. Some had to quit farming....others heard the rather harsh news of “change your ways or change your address”! There were changes and we endured them...every last one of us! In the Bible a generation was marked by forty years and its been nearly that long since those frightening days. So let me ask, is there still a new creation awaiting us? Its an important question because if – as Paul writes – “everything old has passed away”...what does that have to say about old, retiring preachers...or people like you who can remember those days of farm crisis, hedge-to-arrive, Y2K. All of us are older. Is it just the young generation who needs the promise of a new creation instead of the troubled now in which we live? Its a rhetorical question because every one of us knows the answer is NO – EVERYONE NEEDS A BRIGHT TOMORROW. And the one person who can make this tomorrow our today is GOD. God is forever the One who leads the way. God can get us through hurricanes and droughts...through devastating losses and tragedies...through uncertainties of climate change, polarizing politics and theologies. Like the Good Shepherd who leads us into green pastures, still waters, the restoration of our souls, God leads the way for retirees, for you who find yourself in nursing homes, or hospitals or battling life threatening diseases. This God of ours creates futures of promise when all we can see is gloom. A world where life is abundant for the babies who grow in their momma’s wombs. All my life I’ve tried to preach about a God of possibility, opportunity and positivity. I may not have a pulpit after this hour is finished

but I will always have a faith where God refuses to cave to the powers of darkness. **In Christ, there is a new creation** and there always will be. GOD DOESN'T QUIT...and neither should you or I – no matter how our personal lot in life changes. Life does change – its always changing and our tears flow when we see all that passes away...our heart skips beats when the newness of life blesses us. The Apostle Paul tells us that **All this is from God!** Years ago with some other ministers we stood on the lawn of the Vanderbilt mansion in Hyde Park, New York singing “This is my Father’s World” but Sue and I could sing it when we didn’t have a car and walked to school or brought home groceries in the snow. We could sing of God’s goodness when we were paying tuition and worked the cafeteria dish crew or paid our \$40/month rent or a 4 room walk-up that was furnished and all utilities included. Hard times and lush times are in our God’s hands...and hasn’t He seen us through them all?

Our denomination is facing big changes...our local church will soon be in transition...we’re not out of the woods yet with this virus...but you who have been around a while know that God never drops his people flat. We know that whatever mess we find ourselves in – the way out is the way of faith. We may face things we don’t like or agree with but hold onto your faith...open your mind and your heart to the Jesus who still loves you and this fallen world of ours. It is because God is NOT done with us that the Apostle Paul and Pastor Bill and everyone who has lived through their own ups and downs **urges you also not to accept the grace of God in vain.** Schuller said it well: **“tough times don’t last but tough people do.”** This church has endured the Spanish Flu epidemic, World War I when our German ancestors were suspect, the stock market fall and the great depression, World War 2, the boom years of the 50s, the generation gap of the 60s, the Vietnam War of the 70s, the farm crisis of the 80s, the turmoil of the 90s, the attack on America of the 2000s, the Gulf Wars of the 2010s and the Covid Pandemic of the 2020s. We have come through so many dark days...is now any time to give up? Is now any time to go our separate ways? This is a great church and I wouldn’t have stayed here for the 38+ years of my tenure if there wasn’t something wonderful here. Oh we’ve had our squabbles and I haven’t always given you what you wanted. Sometimes I was wrong. Sometimes you were wrong. But all the time we – you and I – were God’s. God is the Glue that holds us together. God is the power that overcomes the problems. God is the One who creates a NEW YOU...for the newness of times that is born today. First Reformed Church:

- THERE IS A NEW CREATION
- THIS NEW CREATION COMES 100% FROM GOD
- THIS NEW CREATION WILL BE YOUR FUTURE...IF YOU DON’T GIVE UP.

My family and I love this place...we have loved our time together...and we’ll always love you and trust that God will bless you beyond all we’ve known together. So we entrust you to God’s Hands.