

## 12.1.19

### Redemption - Made New [Grace]

2 Corinthians 5:16-17

**16From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. 17Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.**

Paul tells us in his writing to the church at Corinth that if anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation. He writes that the old has passed away and the new has come. It's a common theme for evangelicals, for crusaders, for revival preachers and the like - and for good reason. However, what does this mean? What is Paul saying to the church at Corinth? To be a new creation means to find yourself the outcome of a process. This is not something magical that coincides with your acceptance of Jesus - you don't get a "new creation" t-shirt because you sign a covenant membership card at the Reunion Connections desk - unless that'll get you to sign a covenant membership card, then I definitely already have a design mocked up that we can get you ordered.

No, a new creation is the result of the fierce, ongoing exchange between what is old and what is new. A new creation is the consequence or combined, end-accomplishment that is birthed from the clashing of the non-existent with the existent, the sin stained with the pure. There's this beautiful process that takes place, and it truly is magical - in the purest sense of the word. Paul continues...

2 Corinthians 5:18-21

**18All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. 20Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore 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.**

Therefore

**hóste:** so as to, so then, therefore

Original Word: ὥστε

Part of Speech: Conjunction

Transliteration: hóste

Phonetic Spelling: (hoce'-teh)

Definition: so as to, so then, therefore

Usage: so that, therefore, so then, so as to.

hóste (a conjunction, derived from /hōs, "as" and /té, "both-and") – wherefore (with the result that both . . . ), connecting cause to necessary effect which emphasizes the result (the combined, end-accomplishment). The result involved then is the combination of both elements in the correlation, underscoring the inevitable effect of the paired elements.

[This common point ("fulcrum") of the correlation is the key link for yielding the result of the cause-and-effect relationship.] [www.biblehub.com](http://www.biblehub.com)

**oun**: therefore, then, (and) so

Original Word: οὖν

Part of Speech: Conjunction

Transliteration: oun

Phonetic Spelling: (oon)

Definition: therefore, then, (and) so

Usage: therefore, then.

oún (a conjunction) – therefore, now then, accordingly so. (oún) occurs 526 times in the NT and is typically translated "therefore" which means, "By extension, here's how the dots connect."

Why are we talking about cause and effect pastor Todd? Sounds like a science class and I came to learn about God - not science. Well, to me, science sounds like a God class. A God of order. A God of cause and effect. A God of results, and end game, of analysis and direction.

I Corinthians 14:44

**33For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.**

Jeremiah 29:11-13

**11For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. 12Then you**

**will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. 13You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.**

Proverbs 3:5-6

**1 My son, do not forget my teaching,  
but let your heart keep my commandments,  
2 for length of days and years of life  
and peace they will add to you.  
3 Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you;  
bind them around your neck;  
write them on the tablet of your heart.  
4 So you will find favor and good success  
in the sight of God and man.  
5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart,  
and do not lean on your own understanding.  
6 In all your ways acknowledge him,  
and he will make straight your paths.**

He's always had a plan in place. And the plan is the consequence and outcome of the ministry of reconciliation. Listen as we dive deeper into Paul's teaching to the community in Corinth. Listen to what he calls out in each and every one of us when it pertains to a new creation. Paul didn't just write "you're a new creation if you accept Jesus" - it's true, but taken out of context, with no guidance or order, then it becomes a falsehood. And it becomes the worst type of falsehood as it is darkness parading as light...

Matthew 6:23 (partial)

**If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!**

We have to continue to place teaching into context and ask God for guidance. We must seek truth outside of ourselves - becoming a "new creation" through the fierce, ongoing exchange of old and new, stained and righteous.

2 Corinthians 5:1-10

**1For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, 3if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. 4For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. 5He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.**

**6So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, 7for we walk by faith, not by sight. 8Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. 9So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. 10For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.**

This premise is the buildup to Paul's point, where we started this teaching. Paul begins this chapter with speaking to something that should exist within each and every follower of Jesus - the hope of heaven. Heaven is sorely misrepresented and undersold to the world of 2019. We don't talk about it. We don't seem to long for in. To the contrary, we put off death as long as humanly possible and deny and delay its inevitability. Paul says that **"in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling."** And he confirms that we should long for heaven because God confirms our eternity in the presence of His Spirit. What are the fruits of His Spirit?

Galatians 5:22-26

**22But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.**

**25If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. 26Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.**

The Spirit is what is right and true and good in our world. The Spirit is comfort through pain and sorrow. The Spirit is kindness through despair and doubt. The Spirit is the Love that is shared in the face of hatred and judgment. The Spirit is what enables you to be outside of yourself - go Love yourself!

And Paul lays out the bookend to the "therefore" of this chapter - a new creation.

2 Corinthians 5:11-15

**11Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience. 12We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart. 13For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. 14For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; 15and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.**

It's never about you. This story is never about just you. I'm sorry to the inner monologue that is presenting its strongest counter argument out there right now. Listen up, and listen up well... It's not about you! **"that one has died for all, therefore all have died;"** meaning simply this - that to be reconciled to God is to be reconciled to one another. It means we persuade others (sounds almost dirty doesn't it?)

2 Corinthians 5:20-21

**20Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore 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.**

We are ambassadors for Christ. God makes his appeal to others through us. The gravity of that reality should blow your mind. You are the instrument of God - to reconcile others (all mankind) to Himself. So while it's never about you - everything is about you and done for you.

John 1:14

**14And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.**

**charis:** grace, kindness

Original Word: χάρις, ἰτος, ἡ

Part of Speech: Noun, Feminine

Transliteration: charis

Phonetic Spelling: (khar'-ece)

Definition: grace, kindness

Usage: (a) grace, as a gift or blessing brought to man by Jesus Christ, (b) favor, (c) gratitude, thanks, (d) a favor, kindness.

(xáris) is preeminently used of the Lord's favor – freely extended to give Himself away to people (because He is "always leaning toward them").

- God is a God of creation and order, Therefore he created the heavens and the earth
- Man was created with free will and choice, Therefore he chose to sin

- God is without sin, Therefore when man sinned, he separated himself from God
- God is full of truth and grace, Therefore he sent His Son to die for the sin of the world
- Jesus set the example to follow, Therefore to follow him is to reconcile others to God

2 Corinthians 5:17

**Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.**

Jesus doesn't use the term new creation - he speaks of a new commandment - that you would Love one another.

12.8.19

**Redemption - Made Whole [Faith]**

**[the action of saving or being saved from sin, error, or evil]**

**...For what greatness is there in believing what is seen?**

**Augustine of Hippo. (1888)**

[Hebrews 10:37-39]

**Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; <sup>38</sup> but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.” <sup>39</sup> But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.**

[Hebrews 11:1-3]

**Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. 2 For by it the people of old received their commendation. 3 By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.**

[Hebrews 11:6]

**And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.<sup>1</sup>**

[Luke 8:42-48]

**As Jesus went, the people pressed around him. <sup>43</sup> And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and though she had spent all her living on physicians, she could not be healed by anyone. <sup>44</sup> She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, and immediately her discharge of blood ceased. <sup>45</sup> And Jesus said, "Who was it that touched me?" When all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the crowds surround you and are pressing in on you!" <sup>46</sup> But Jesus said, "Someone touched me, for I perceive that power has gone out from me." <sup>47</sup> And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before him declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. <sup>48</sup> And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace."**

### **Introduction and Objectives**

Verse 3, of Hebrews 11 is translated from the original Greek as;

Now faith is the realization of what is hoped for, and the proof of things not seen...

To get us to a reasonable point of grasping the reality of faith we first must

acknowledge the unseen object our faith - Jesus. Jesus introduces us to our faith in

Him through His plan of redemption for us. When we believe in Him, and have faith

in all that He says about us and all that He promises to us, then we are being made

whole [completed in Him] - the healing begins. That Jesus has been forgiving and

redeeming us even while we were still toxic, hostile, and willfully rebellious is

absolutely mind-blowing - but... IT... IS... REAL. His Redemption is real and it is our

faith in Him makes us whole. Throughout the gospels Jesus continues to reveal this

one eternal truth; **by faith-believing in Him we are saved, we are healed, we are set free, we are redeemed - we are made whole.** Those are all actual words Jesus said to people as He was forgiving, saving and healing their minds, bodies and spirits. So, He has secured this clear path for our redemption and all He says to us is... **"Believe in Me and have Faith to follow Me where I lead you."** Faith is walking down that path. Our journey of faith along that path makes us whole - this is redemption, and then the Advent.

### **Historical Context**

At the time of the writing of the book of Hebrews [65-69 A.D.], the Jewish Christians had continued to celebrate Judaism's traditional practices as well as to observe temple worship and sacrificial ritual. Their presence in the temple and the synagogue had been tolerated by their unbelieving countrymen and the temple hierarchy; but by now they were in danger of being excommunicated. Even though they had believed in Jesus as the Messiah this was like being sentenced to death - to be cut off like that felt like being killed. Their reverence and respect for the laws of Moses and all that comes with it had not been diminished by their acknowledgment of the Messiah; for them, as well as for the rest of their race, a deep intensity rested on those ceremonies from which they were threatened with exclusion. They were being told they must recant their belief in Jesus as Messiah or be cut-off from their religious heritage. They were becoming weak in their faith and doubting their confession. So, it is under these circumstances that the writer of Hebrews dials up the most glorious names of Jewish history to re-affirm to them their belief and faith in Jesus Christ. It was not by offering sacrifices, nor by attending festivals, nor by the rituals and exactness with which they had celebrated

any external worship and ceremonies, that their great forefathers had won their faith, but by their bold determination and steadfast trust in God.

### **Biblical Context**

Intervention: In order to back up his point, the writer of Hebrews (most likely Paul) links two passages of Scripture: Isaiah 26:20 and Habakkuk 2:3–4. Both passages are meant to illustrate how the Jews of the past also had to WAIT for God to intervene on their behalf, and to reassure all who were struggling in faith - weakening under the threat - beginning to believe that God's lack of action or intervention was a failure on His part to keep His promise to return [Advent]. Reminding them that waiting on God is an essential element of having faith in God. Remember... **"faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."**

Faith: This passage in Hebrews is the only place in the Bible where there is a precise and decisive definition of faith. It is SO ironic that the one thing that becomes the jump-starter for all other Christian virtues and gifts—the title used to hold our place as Christians (people of faith)—the one inward Spiritual Gift that validates all our good works—the only path to Christ who alone leads to God the Father, is profoundly revealed to us all as... **the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen? Not only ironic but SO consistent with who God is.**

substance - no doubt, complete confidence

evidence - conviction, creed, certainty

The writer is saying to his readers, **faith is grabbing on to the future in the midst of the present moment, believing in the unseen in the midst of only what can be seen.** This is what marks us as people of faith - this is what tattoos our heart saying we walk by faith and not by sight. If the present world was good and not evil, there would be not be much to test or bring obstacles to this faith. Even though we cannot be separated from His God's love as people of faith and we find all that is good in Christ, the world, as humanity has made it, is by no means like the handiwork and creation of God - this is not what He made us for. We see all around us shameless and defiant contradictions to what we are told, that justice, and truth, and goodness are the most things of all things known to man. Yet where is the justice, truth, and goodness? Besides the endless evidence that good is not providing the world its moral compass, we are continually betrayed by similar contradictions within ourselves. In our moments temptation the terrible consequences of giving in seem far away. However much we may be convinced that in the end obedience is better than sin, we find it hard to remember our conviction and covenant in the moment it is wanted. But in the midst of all this, in spite of what our eyes perpetually tell us, and in spite of the strange forgetfulness which our inclinations perpetually cast over us, in spite of contradictions all around us and weakness within us, there is a voice from the depths of our own souls that never ceases to repeat that right is really stronger than wrong, and truth is better than falsehood, and justice is surer than injustice, believing is better than doubting. To believe this voice, and to allow it to guide our life with the conviction that it will guide us to our best outcome; **to do this is faith.** Trusting the Spirit's voice that speaks within us, even when it contradicts the voices that speak outside of us. To trust what is unseen above what is seen. To believe in what we hear from Him and not what we hear from them. That is the faith He leads us to. This faith is a real

force, a power in both the great and small things of our life. Faith is the force and power to support the follower and the seeker by giving both of them access to all the strength of our Savior. The promise to those early believing Jews and to us here today is to give us faith for "the win over sin." Not just the sin out there - but the sin in here (within ourselves) the inward sin that keeps us from being healthy and whole. And this faith is final show of force and power to prove to us that God redeems us to Himself through our faith believing relationship with Jesus. Enough faith to be vulnerable (not soft and weak - but honest and open), to trust and wait on His promises, this is our substance of things hoped for, this is our evidence of things not seen, this is Christian faith. The victory that overcomes both worlds - within and without. Faith to decisively clarify that the hardest enemy for us to encounter is not after all the sight of this world's cultural hatred, social injustice, and political corruption. It is when conscience, at the very moment of demanding our obedience, proclaims also our sinfulness. Faith for the win over sin - **Faith to make us whole.**

### **Conclusion: Faith, It's Not What You Think**

- **One - Faith is not belief on the evidence of the senses - we should never be navigated to or away from faith solely by what we feel, but by the truth we know.**
- **Two - Faith is not credulity - being naive or lacking sound judgment. However, if we know the truth, it is correct to both rest and act in faith.**

- **Three - Faith is not a mere assent of the understanding - it is a determination to trust God - completely. It happens in rare moments of intentional unity, in times of unquestionable need, in both expected and unexpected moments that are void of doubt and disbelief.**
- **Four - Faith is not subject to being deconstructed by the wisdom of man. Faith must be actively experienced up close - not critically argued from a dissociating distance.**

[Luke 8]

The woman had a menstrual cycle that had lasted 12 years. For her this meant she was publicly condemned as unclean, expelled from all temple worship, and removed from her family and home. She was literally forced to live outside village or town boundaries and had spent all her possible resources on physicians. Anemic, weak and broken she had lost all hope - until she heard about Jesus. What she heard was that He was a healer - he touched the sick and afflicted and they were miraculously made whole by believing in Him and having faith in His words and promises. She found out he was passing through the area where she was and she was suddenly knew that if she could get to him she would be healed - she had nothing to lose, she had already lost it all. Her plan was simple, she would disappear into the crowd and not bother him or even dare to ask him anything - she decided she would not even wait for him to touch her she needed to just get close. Her faith in Him had become so real and alive that she believed if she only could touch him she would be made whole.

She was. When Jesus felt her faith there was a manifestation of redemption - Jesus felt it. He asks... "who touched me"? And now she is seen by all - no longer diseased, cast out, and broken. And Jesus says, "Your faith has made you whole."

## **Advent Week 3 – Made Ready Through Love**

**Reunion Community**

**December 15, 2019**

### **Intro:**

In this third week of Preparing for Advent we are going to take a look at Love. To have any understanding of or to prepare ourselves in any way for the Advent of Christ we must understand and practice love. Love is the foundational cause of the Advent of Christ. "For God so Loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. . ." God's love towards us is the reason for Advent.

Love is also emotional; it involves our feelings towards people and things. We could spend years talking about what causes us to have the feelings of love and how they affect us and how we can try to control those feelings and emotions. But there is a very practical side of Love in how it is expressed that I want us to look at. How I want to look at love today may be best explained this way:

"Pullin' out my big black book

Cause when I need a word defined that's where I look

So I move to the L's quick, fast, in a hurry

Threw on my specs, thought my vision was blurry

I looked again but to my dismay

It was black and white with no room for grey

Ya see, a big "V" stood beyond my word

And yo that's when it hit me, that luv is a verb

Back in the day there was a man  
Who stepped out of Heaven and he walked the land  
He delivered to the people an eternal choice  
With a heart full of luv and the truth in His voice  
Gave up His life so that we may live  
How much more luv could the Son of God give?  
Here is the example that we oughtta be matchin'  
Cause luv is a word that requires some action."

Of course, that was DC Talk and their song "Luv is a Verb." God used that song to help me understand that I was making the concept of "Love" far too complicated and mystical in my way of thinking. God expressed His love in a very practical way that has very complicated and mystical repercussions that we don't fully understand, but all we have to do is take His word for it and the benefits are ours.

So, lets take a look at some of the practical ways that God has said we ought to express our love towards one another and if we do this, we are preparing ourselves for His Advent.

#### I. Love is Expressed in Service

Mark 10:45 (NKJ) ***"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."***

Jesus' life was the great example of service. God's only Son, seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven, humbling himself and coming to Earth as a mere

man. Not to be praised and glorified as was His right, but to serve. Walking among us, teaching, healing and serving. Even on the night He was betrayed, he knelt down to wash his Disciples feet as one last object lesson on service.

In Matthew 25: 35-40 (NLT) Jesus taught, ***“For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. 36 I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.” 37 “Then these righteous ones will reply, ‘Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? 39 When did we ever see you sick or in prison, and visit you?’ 40 And the King will tell them, ‘I assure you, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!’***

Love expressed in service is simple. Helping someone who is without by providing some of what you have to meet a basic need like food, shelter and clothing. This is Love. This is Service.

Another way that love can be expressed in service is found in Ephesians 6:5 (NLT), ***“Slaves, obey your earthly masters with deep respect and fear. Serve them sincerely as you would serve Christ.”***

One of the things that we talk about here at Reunion is that not all of the Bible verses are **about** us but they are all **for** us. This is one of those verses. I am not calling any of us who have jobs ‘slaves!’ Just relax. What God is telling us in this verse is that how we conduct ourselves while we are at work is a reflection of what is inside of us. And if we belong to God, then we ought to conduct ourselves on our jobs as though we are doing it for Him. This again reveals humility and it turns service and in turn love.

Another example of service can be found in the attitude of this missionary mother. Her story goes like this:

“A missions director once met with the mother of two of his agency’s missionaries and spent some time getting to know her. She prepared tea for the director in her parlor and as they drank the tea, she explained to him the difficulty of having a daughter on the mission field of China and a son as a missionary in Sudan. She loved and missed them dearly, but as she explained, her love for God allowed her to let them follow His will for their lives. The mother went on to describe the burden her son had for the Sudanese people. Her relay of his description of the people brought her to tears several times during the conversation. The mission’s director left her house with a deeper appreciation for the parents of missionaries and a greater burden for the country of Sudan.

A few months later the mission’s director got word that a missionary in Sudan had been killed—it was the Scottish lady’s son. Feeling he should be the one to break the news to her, he once again visited the mother in her home. After telling her the tragic news, the mother looked down, and in a few moments of composure she said, “Sir, I would rather have my son die in the middle of Sudan, alone, than to have him living here with me, disobeying God’s will.”

What a powerful example of service. A mother surrendering her will to the will of God for the lives of her children.

Let us move on now to the next practical expression of Love. . .

## II. Love is Expressed in Sacrifice.

John 15:13 (NIV) ***“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”***

The ultimate expression of sacrifice was given by Jesus Himself when He laid down His life so that we may have forgiveness of our sins. God’s word tells us that the payment for sin is death and Jesus paid that price for us so that we don’t have to die in our sins but that we might live and have our sins forgiven. Thank God for His plan of Salvation! This is the greatest expression of love that we have ever been given.

Another example of love through sacrifice is found in the life of Ruth. To set the stage for this act of sacrifice let’s look at Ruth 1:1-17 (NLT), ***“In the days when the judges ruled in Israel, a man from Bethlehem in Judah left the country because of a severe famine. He took his wife and two sons and went to live in the country of Moab. 2 The man’s name was Elimelech, and his wife was Naomi. Their two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in the land of Judah. During their stay in Moab, 3 Elimelech died and Naomi was left with her two sons. 4 The two sons married Moabite women. One married a woman named Orpah, and the other a woman named Ruth. But about ten years later, 5 both Mahlon and Kilion died. This left Naomi alone, without her husband or sons. 6 Then Naomi heard in Moab that the LORD had blessed his people in Judah by giving them good crops again. So Naomi and her daughters-in-law got ready to leave Moab to return to her homeland. 7 With her two daughters-in-law she set out from the place where she had been living, and they took the road that would lead them back to Judah. 8 But on the way, Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, “Go back to your mothers’ homes instead of coming with me. And may the LORD reward you for your kindness to your husbands and to me. 9 May the LORD bless you with the security of another marriage.” Then she kissed them good-bye,***

*and they all broke down and wept. 10 "No," they said. "We want to go with you to your people." 11 But Naomi replied, "Why should you go on with me? Can I still give birth to other sons who could grow up to be your husbands? 12 No, my daughters, return to your parents' homes, for I am too old to marry again. And even if it were possible, and I were to get married tonight and bear sons, then what? 13 Would you wait for them to grow up and refuse to marry someone else? No, of course not, my daughters! Things are far more bitter for me than for you, because the LORD himself has caused me to suffer." 14 And again they wept together, and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye. But Ruth insisted on staying with Naomi. 15 "See," Naomi said to her, "your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods. You should do the same." 16 But Ruth replied, "Don't ask me to leave you and turn back. I will go wherever you go and live wherever you live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. 17 I will die where you die and will be buried there. May the LORD punish me severely if I allow anything but death to separate us!"*

So, the story goes on in Ruth chapter 2 that they arrive at the land of a relative of Naomi's late husband, a man named Boaz. There Ruth began to follow after the shearers and pick of the scraps of grain to provide for her and Naomi. When Boaz hears about this, he makes sure that his workers leave plenty for them. One day Boaz speaks to Ruth and says (Ruth 2:8-12 NLT), ***"Listen, my daughter. Stay right here with us when you gather grain; don't go to any other fields. Stay right behind the women working in my field. 9 See which part of the field they are harvesting, and then follow them. I have warned the young men not to bother you. And when you are thirsty, help yourself to the water they have drawn from the well." 10 Ruth fell at his feet and thanked him warmly. "Why are you being so kind to me?"***

***she asked. "I am only a foreigner." 11 "Yes, I know," Boaz replied. "But I also know about the love and kindness you have shown your mother-in-law since the death of your husband. I have heard how you left your father and mother and your own land to live here among complete strangers. 12 May the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge, reward you fully."***

The story goes on that Boaz and Ruth marry and have a son named Obed, who becomes the grandfather of King David. So, Ruth was the Great-Grandmother of King David.

And this is the point to this story, Ruth sacrificed her land, her people, her way of life to provide for and take care of her mother-in-law Naomi. She felt that this was thing that she ought to do. She had no idea what the plan was that God had in place for her. But her willingness to sacrifice for what was right put her in the place that God wanted her to be. In this, Ruth becomes a great example of love through sacrifice.

Loving through Sacrifice is about more than a willingness lay down our life for another it is also about our willingness to lay down our will for the benefit of another.

The third way that we can practically show Love is:

### III. Love is Expressed Though Obedience

Jesus taught us very directly on this, In John 14:15 (NLT) He says, ***"If you love me, obey my commandments."***

One of the traits of a Christian is obedience to the teachings of Christ. Jesus said that the student would become like the master and that only happens when student obeys what the master says. The very term Christian means to be Christ-like. This of course requires obedience. In Matthew Jesus also says this about obedience, (Matthew 7:21 NKV), "**Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.**"

There is an expectation of obedience by those who call on the name of Jesus.

In the Biblical account of Abraham and Isaac we have an excellent and extreme example of how love is expressed through obedience.

Genesis 22:1-13 (NLT), "**Later on God tested Abraham's faith and obedience. "Abraham!" God called. "Yes," he replied. "Here I am." 2 "Take your son, your only son-- yes, Isaac, whom you love so much-- and go to the land of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will point out to you." 3 The next morning Abraham got up early. He saddled his donkey and took two of his servants with him, along with his son Isaac. Then he chopped wood to build a fire for a burnt offering and set out for the place where God had told him to go. 4 On the third day of the journey, Abraham saw the place in the distance. 5 "Stay here with the donkey," Abraham told the young men. "The boy and I will travel a little farther. We will worship there, and then we will come right back." 6 Abraham placed the wood for the burnt offering on Isaac's shoulders, while he himself carried the knife and the fire. As the two of them went on together, 7 Isaac said, "Father?" "Yes, my son," Abraham replied. "We have the wood and the fire," said the boy, "but where is the lamb for the sacrifice?" 8 "God will provide himself a lamb, my son," Abraham answered. And they both went on together. 9 When they arrived at the place where God had told Abraham to go, he built an altar and placed the wood on it. Then he tied Isaac up and laid him on the altar**

***over the wood. 10 And Abraham took the knife and lifted it up to kill his son as a sacrifice to the LORD. 11 At that moment the angel of the LORD shouted to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Yes," he answered. "I'm listening." 12 "Lay down the knife," the angel said. "Do not hurt the boy in any way, for now I know that you truly fear God. You have not withheld even your beloved son from me. 13 Then Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in a bush. So, he took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering on the altar in place of his son."***

In this account we have God asking Isaac to something very extreme, to sacrifice his only son on an altar in a test of obedience. Abraham's response to this extreme request was extreme obedience. What is amazing to me about Abraham in this account is His confidence in God. Abraham tells his servants to stay put while he and Isaac go on a little further, there they will worship and after a little while **we** will come back. Abraham had complete confidence that God would provide a sacrifice and that he and Isaac would return. The question for us is not whether we would be willing to sacrifice one of our children to God, but rather are we willing to be obedient to God whatever it may be that He is asking for us to do?

In this study we have looked at how Love can be expressed through Service, Sacrifice and Obedience. There are dozens other practical ways that we could look at how love can be expressed with dozens of examples for each one. We could go on for months and months on this topic, but let's just take a moment and ask ourselves how are we doing in these three areas in expressing our love.

How have I been expressing my love through Service recently?

How have I been expressing my love through Sacrifice recently?

How have I been expressing my love through Obedience recently?

In closing let's take a little quiz based on 1 Corinthians 13. There are several ways that are listed in this chapter that show us more ways that love is practical. I have summarized them below in these statements:

Love is Patient.

Love is Kind.

Love is not Boastful, Jealous, Proud or Rude.

Love does not demand its own way.

Love is not irritable.

Love does not keep score.

Love does not delight in evil but rejoices in truth.

Love Protects, Hopes, Trusts and Perseveres.

Now on this list replace the word "Love" with your name. Now how many of these statements could still be said to be true? What statements would be true most of the time? What statements would rarely be true? This week, take a moment to thank God for the ones that are true most of the time and ask Him for His help on the ones that are rarely true.

Prayer:

"Dear God, during this Advent Season help us to prepare by looking at how we have been showing love in our lives through Service, Sacrifice and Obedience. Lord, help us to do better. We need your help in showing love in practical ways. Fill us with

Your love Lord in such a way that it reaches those around us and causes them to think about You. Let our love for one another be a witness to those who do not know You. In Jesus name, Amen."

## **Advent 2019 - Redemption**

**12.22.19**

### **Made Forever [Hope]**

#### **Introduction**

In 2004, I was in a warehouse in south Phoenix. It was used to store old hospital furniture, and outdated equipment and decor removed from St. Joseph's Hospital which began as a Parish school in 1892, founded by the Sisters of Mercy. After they successfully raised the \$\$\$ to build a small 24-room hospital in the mid-1940s, the Sisters purchased 10 acres of land at Third Avenue and Thomas Road which was then part of an old dairy farm. They were criticized for choosing land so far north of the city, literally out in the country. Those 10 acres cost \$25,000. They paid for the land and then raised the money through large donors and grants to build the original St. Joseph's which still stands. In 1955, just behind that original building facing Thomas Road the Sisters built the small Marian Chapel with a dark wood kneeler in front of a large Crucifix Cross. Marian Chapel and that kneeler served the thousands of families, staff, employees and patients of St Joe's until the chapel was first expanded and remodeled in 2003. On that day in 2005, I was given the opportunity to walk around the warehouse to see if there was anything I wanted so that it could be used in the new Reunion location on 25th Drive. In the far corner of that warehouse was a dismantled, scarred and old dark wood kneeler. I asked the gentlemen, "what's that - It looks like an old kneeler"? He replied, "that is exactly what it is - I was supposed to throw it in the dumpster six months ago. But because I knew it came out of the old chapel at St. Joe's I just couldn't bring myself to do it - I'm trying to be a good Catholic (he laughed)." I said, "well, since I'm not your Priest I don't know anything about you being a good Catholic! But if you give it to me, I'll tell

God that you are a good man and I promise people will use that kneeler to pray from again." He laughed again and said, "it's yours - saved from the dumpster, I guess they call that redemption"! I remember saying to him... "yep, just like me."

## **Content**

Luke 21:28

**Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.**

Jesus spoke these words directly to his disciples. What did He mean at the time He said them, and, what do they mean to us today? At the time Jesus was entering the Temple in Jerusalem and had found a spot within the Court of the Gentiles (an inclusive place where everyone could find and worship God) to have public conversation and of course to use those conversations as teachable moments. Big crowds gathered including the religious critics and enemies of Jesus. The whole conversation that day began with the disciples remarking about amazing the Temple was. Jesus opens this door for revealing God's plan for redemption by talking about destruction. "Yes, this is an amazing place, but you should know there's a day coming when not one stone of this place will be standing on another." What? It's this prophetic comment and others like it that opens the door for Jesus to teach and prepare for the end of all things only so He can teach them how all things can truly begin - that is redemption.

He goes on to describe the final stages of God's plan beginning with the Son of Man's return. That conversation is as captivating and polarizing today as it was

when He had it there in the Temple that day. People have always spouted and speculated whether their own time in history might be the end-times. Here are a few reasons for that kind thinking and speculation.

**First,** Jesus taught that his return was close; close like it could come at any moment. Since He didn't give a specific date and time, when it didn't happen immediately it is human nature wonder if it ever would or how soon that it would happen.

**Second,** for true believers the return of Jesus is desirable and wanted because it represents the redemption and hope for all who believe. Seriously, what real Christian would not look hopefully for the day when justice and righteousness are established and God's people are vindicated? Clearly Jesus was calling His disciples that day in the Temple to have an attitude anticipation toward events of the end—not just a passive and casual attitude that “it will all sort itself out in the end.”

**Third,** it's only natural to try and fill in the gaps of prophetic revelation and piece together the eschatological puzzle and end-times mystery until they make sense to us - everyone has done it since Jesus promised it. People enjoy trying to solve mysteries - that is why someone came up with "escape rooms" HA! Unfortunately, people get goofy and self-focused. Things like speculating and setting dates (like on a calendar) or dogmatic attitudes and pride about timelines and event sequences. Any kind of approach and pursuit like that has to be reeled in by a huge dose of humility and an understanding of the realistic gaps and limitations of our scriptural knowledge. More importantly we need to learn to trust God and have faith in His

promise. So, we need to carefully clarify Scripture from what is only implied - not what we assume.

**Finally**, that day Jesus told his disciples to be awake and on watch. It's been 2000 years since that conversation took place - shouldn't we be a little more engaged and alert ourselves? Contrary to cultural disgust for the presence and promise of Jesus if we are going to follow Him then we should consider anticipate our redemption and the instruction He gave that day. Jesus called on disciples to be "advent minded" without pulling back from living life, loving people, and sharing the hope of redemption. The coming of Jesus is here today - He literally comes to us every day. Are you receiving and ready for Him?

The teachable moment that day was not Jesus syncing i-calendars of end-time events with His team. The conversation was to share a portrait of the moments of Redemption and hope - just like us they were going to need it. Old Testament imagery abounds in his words, since the event will mark the culmination of God's promise to his people. From that portrait, we can know the general character of events surrounding His Advent even if we cannot know the exact timing. That is a process of belief - faith - hope.

So what will the Advent look like? Luke 21:25-28 tell us. Its cosmic and apocalyptic imagery indicates that God is about to work in a major and supernatural way. Heavenly signs will manifest as the cosmos releases its power. Sun, moon and stars will signal the time. In particular, the sea is mentioned, since human beings have often feared its power. Such cosmic signs will indicate a shaking up of the natural order. All of this shifting and shake-up was prophesied even before Jesus said it

that day by the ancient prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel Ezekiel, Joel, Amos, Nahum, even Haggai. The imagery presented by Jesus also foreshadows portions of the book of Revelation. Here is a portrait of our own... give just a moment to imagine the fear that an unleashed, out-of-control creation might generate, think of being caught in a major hurricane, flood or tornado. Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. There will be a sense of being trapped and tormented. Fainting from terror, pictures of someone hyperventilating and collapsing because of anxiety. Some argue that Jesus' words about heavenly chaos are figurative for severe destruction - don't count on it. Even creation itself will be in convulsions. Then disciples and followers of Jesus will know that God is about to act. Jesus told, "Hey it will definitely be crazy, and it will be real, but not one hair on your head will be harmed."

He went on to describe the return of the Son of Man in language that recalled the prophet Daniel (chapter 7:13-14). There he described:

Psalm 104:3

**“one like a son of man.” This one rides the clouds like a god but is a human figure**

Most important, he shares authority with “the Ancient of Days,” a clear reference to God. That authority especially entails the right to judge and make vindication for those who believe and follow. Jesus says the Son of Man will return in a cloud with power and great glory. According to the book of Revelation, when Jesus does return, it will be to take rulership over all the earth and exercise judgment on behalf of his people. Jesus said it that day in the Temple - lift up your heads, because your

redemption is drawing near. At that moment hope will become confidence. God's promises to his own are being consummated. As the world shrinks back in fear, the believers and followers of Jesus will look up in expectation. These things, the immediate signs of his return, will show that God is in control of all time, space, and events—that our trust in Him has led to vindication and to our Redemption.

## **Conclusion**

**So there is redemption** - we are living it. In fact, you and I were made for that very purpose - redemption. As God's word says, we are truly His masterpiece and His priority. His love for us goes beyond logic and human understanding and yet He has revealed His deepest secrets and desires for us through our relationship with His Son, Jesus Christ. His love surely did come find us and we will never again be the same. He intentionally chose us to be His own. Whatever part of our hearts, minds, and bodies that have been destroyed, devastated, devoured, discarded and dumped will be gathered up and made into something beautiful, alive and relevant. That is redemption, you and I being made whole - made new in Him. This Advent and maybe for the first time we should look at our destiny and hope through the lens of the great Redeemer Jesus Christ. Listen to the words of hope that Paul the apostle wrote to Timothy and the Thessalonian church in Greece. They are words written to comfort the people about their family and friends who had died before the Advent (second coming) of Jesus. More importantly they are the words that signal God's final plan for redemption of those who believe and trust in Him. Hope is the greatest form of redemption. The Advent of Jesus is our greatest HOPE.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, 5:1-11

**But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.**

**14 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. 15 For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.**

**Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. 2 For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3 While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. 4 But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. 5 For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. 6 So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. 8 But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet**

**the hope of salvation. 9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him.**

**11 Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.**

pastor steve Isaac