

At the heart of Jesus' church is discipleship. That's not a program but a relationship we live. Discipleship is all about sharing life with Jesus so that we grow to be just like him. So that he rubs off on us. So that as we walk and talk together through life, I'm changed and become like him. At the heart of the church is a relationship. We have nothing to sell, Jesus isn't for sale, you're not for sale, I'm not for sale, but we do have the wonderful opportunity of building a close intimate relationship with Jesus which floods all our relationships with his character and DNA. We have the ministry of reconciliation.

So what did the first church do? Start with a constitution and then become incorporated, hold elections and debate policy. "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching (the bible) and to fellowship (shared lives),

the breaking of bread (communion) and to prayer." Acts 2:42

This is a relationship pattern with Jesus at the centre, empowering, directing, shaping everything. And this community was prepared to die for each other. They showed it by spending their money, not on projects, but on each other's needs. They suffered financial loss to meet the needs of the weak in their community. The people who could never repay them. They lived the ministry of reconciliation. They were Christ to each other.

They didn't argue over organs or modern forms of worship, they loved each other, just as if they were loving Christ, just as if Christ were loving them. "And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." (Acts 2:47b) Do you notice that this is life or death stuff.

Let's never forget that we are a new creation and there is only one person who can tell us what that looks like, and that's Jesus, because no-one else has been there, lives there, and is able to tell us how to be living that new creation today.

I don't want to make the church in the shape of the old, I want to be letting Jesus make us in his shape, by his power, to his glory, so that his kingdom comes and his will is done.

Let us pray. Jesus show us where we are doing things the old worldly way, that we might change, that we might repent. Show us your way, that we might be living your new creation, not only as individuals but also as your body. Amen.

## Christ Church Lutheran

Worship Times - 9.00am & 10.45am  
 Pastor: Tim 0427326553



Reaching Out with the Love of Jesus that All my Know, Worship & Grow in Christ

14 March 2010

**NEW**

2 Corinthians 5:16-21



Today as we listen to Jesus we focus on the word 'NEW'. Paul says in the reading for today; "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" (2 Cor. 5:17) Jesus is doing something new, that's why it is crucial, not just important, but crucial that we listen.

Ask the person next to you to describe something they've never seen or experienced before? You simply can't do it. If I'd have asked my great-great grandparents to describe a data projector to me what do you think their response would have been? I reckon they would have looked at me strange as if I was from another world.

We know what a date projector is, but how would we go about explaining it to people who don't have any idea of technology, who use oil based lights and the Royal Mail is the only form

of distance communication. That would be a real challenge, trying to describe something as simple as a data projector. Jesus has come and ushered in a new creation, something we couldn't have dreamed of even with our wildest imagination. Something even more difficult to explain than a data projector. Quite simply if I'm not listening it is impossible for me to understand this new creation, let alone live in it and enjoy it.

That's part of what it means that I'm a sinner. It's not that I'm good or bad, it's that I simply don't have the capacity to understand, let alone begin to create this new creation that Jesus is bringing in.

Jesus has birthed us to be citizens of heaven! Who thinks they can adequately describe heaven? That would be totally arrogant. Jesus uses images,

analogies but struggles because of our limitations, but he does reassure us the most important aspect of heaven; he'll be there. There to enjoy this wonderful new exciting life with us. And there won't be any death, sin or the devil to wreck this new creation of his.

Can I describe Heaven, the Kingdom of God to you? No, but I know someone who can. I know someone who's been there, and knows the way there. If we follow him, he'll get us there.

Remember our first point in 'Listen' is that Jesus is our leader. Once we lose contact with him, we're lost. Once we lose contact with Jesus there quite simply isn't any way we can reflect the image of heaven here on earth. And that is what Jesus has created us to do, reflect his image.

Where do I find Jesus notes, Jesus' image? In the bible. So scripture is crucial if I'm to stay in close contact with Jesus. Otherwise I could be deceived. And who's the great deceiver? The Devil, and the last thing he wants if for Jesus' kingdom to grow and flourish, he's out to wreck things. He's out to get us lost, that's why it is important to examine things, to examine ourselves, our motives, our way of doing things. Because it is so easy to lose our way, and that's on our own, let alone with the Devil actively leading up the garden path.

If I don't listen to Jesus there quite simply is no way for me to do things Jesus' way, let alone live as a citizen of heaven. Jesus has created something new.

And you don't live the new by doing the same old things. In Jesus we are a new creation, that is both as an individual and as a body.

What's this got to do with the church? The church is to be the expression of Jesus' new creation here on

earth. So if I'm not listening to Jesus I'll be listening to the world around me, and then who will be shaping us?

The reading for today from Joshua reminds me of the dangers of not listening to God, but focusing on what everyone else is doing, and then following their example. That only led to exile!

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### Jesus is making everything NEW!

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God brought the Children of Israel out of Egypt and brought them into the desert so that he could mould them to be his people, to reflect his very nature and personality. But whenever they felt stressed what did they invariably do? Complained and Compared. If only we were back in Egypt; there we had food, there we had water. How often do they look back to the supposed good old days? Which totally infuriated God, he was leading them into the 'Promised Land' something that made anything they'd

experienced before pale into insignificance. But they looked back.

Then they looked sideways. Give us a king just like everyone else, was their cry. God had come to be their king, to live with them to actively be part of their lives, to lead them, to defend them, but no, 'Give us a king just like everyone else'. They simply couldn't

find their security in this God who had formed them, grown them and freed them to be a people who could reflect him and share life intimately with him. They needed something tangible that they could manipulate and achieve what they dreamed possible. How far short of the mark did they fall!

This is why I get nervous when I can't see any difference in the way we structure the church and the way we do business. The business model, no matter how wonderful is always old, it can never be the new Jesus has created, because it is the product of our imaginations. Is Jesus the pulsating heart beat of business? What runs

business? Profit! Does anyone see a problem?

Jesus once said when his disciples were arguing about who was going to be the top dog; "For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? (The old assumption is the one at the table being waited on it the place to be.) Is it not the one who is at the table? BUT I am among you as one who serves." (Luke 22:27) Jesus doesn't work from a profit motive where he gets control over other people, manipulating them to get what he wants.

Actually how does politics work? We grab for power so that we can manipulate things the way we want. The top dog tells the others what to do, and you work your way down the chain of command.

That's the old, the top dog is in command and reaps the most, and we're actually tempted to believe that is right. We reward the successful with wealth way beyond their needs and hide thousands of people living on or below the

poverty line. But the share price is high and the investors are happy with their dividend. They're making money. That's the old fallen world's model. Why do we look at it as church and seek to take what we call it's best practices and then attempt to grow Jesus' church. Does anyone spot a problem here? Ask the person next to you.

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### Business operates in the old.

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Paul said to the Corinthians; "From now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view... the old has gone ...the new is here!" (2 Cor. 5:16)

Paul continues; "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry - of making a profit for him! NO - he gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sin against them." (2 Cor. 5:19)

Do you notice the church has nothing to sell, but it does have relationships to heal? Relationships that exude the very nature and character of God as we love one another, just as Christ loves us. How does Christ love us? He has died for us. He is prepared to die for us, and so empowers each of us to die for one other, not to neglect each other on the altar of comfort and financial security. That thought always brings me to a point of repentance.

I know in and of myself I don't have what it takes to die for you, especially if you're irritating me. I probably figure you're the one who deserves a kick in the pants. But Jesus dies for who? "While we were still sinner, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:8b) While I was still a sinner, totally consumed with myself and my own little word, simply seeking to make myself comfortable and enjoy life as best I could. While I was still so self absorbed Jesus risked everything and died for me, that I now might live for him, through him, in him.