

Reflection - Fourth Sunday after Pentecost  
16-06-2024  
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

1 Samuel 15:34–16:13 Saul rejected – Samuel anoints David

Psalms 20 Prayer for Protection – Place your Trust in God

2 Corinthians 5:6-10,14-17 Walk by faith not Sight  
Everyone in Christ is a New Creation

Mark 4: 26-34 Two parables – The Growing Seed  
The Mustard Seed

### Introduction

This morning I would like to focus on a verse of scripture from Paul's second letter to the Corinthians 4:17 :-

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

When you looked in the mirror this morning did you think, wow! look at that, a "New Creation"? Maybe not, but the reality is, that if we are "in Christ", we are a "New Creation"!

I remember a few years back, jumping a fence which was something that I would have done with ease in my twenties, but I was in my late forties, and I almost didn't make it, and got very embarrassed.

In a physical sense we all age, but if we turn our lives over to Jesus, we are a new creation! You might be thinking, "I've been a Christian for a long time, how can I be a New Creation?"

Well, today I want to assure you that you are a "New Creation".

I would like us to look at what it might be for us to be a new creation, and how being a new creation will affect our lives.

### New Creation

So, let's begin by delving a little deeper into what it is for us to be a New Creation.

It begins, as the verse says when we are "in Christ". When we accept what Jesus has done for us, in his life death and resurrection we become "in Christ". It can also be described as having faith. When we put our faith in what Jesus has done for us.

Primarily it is not about what we do, but who we are.

I think sometimes people are unsure of what it is to be a Christian.

I think that in the general community there is a sense that, maybe being a Christian, is about being good, or believing that there is a God out there somewhere. But this is not what is at the essence of being a Christian.

At the essence of what it is to be a Christian is to be, "in Christ".

I think people are often wondering about the meaning and purpose of life. So much effort goes into what we can do for ourselves, but it is only when we fully and totally hand our lives over to God that we can know the depth and meaning of Life.

The paradox is this – it is only when we fully hand our lives over to God, that we can fully realize the depth and fullness of what it means to be human. We must give up before we can receive.

When we realize that we cannot get to God on our own. When we acknowledge that it is only by accepting what Jesus has done for us, that we can truly experience God's love and forgiveness in our lives, then we begin to understand what it is to be a "New Creation".

So, to be a "New Creation" is about knowing we are loved by God. It is about having the assurance that we cannot be cut off from God, and that we will be secure in God's love forever.

What happens to our physical bodies will of course affect us, but no matter what physical ailments we have, the fact that we are a "New Creation", cannot be taken away from us.

### Growth

And when we are a "New Creation", we will continue to grow in the knowledge and love of God.

In today's Gospel reading Jesus tells two parables about the Kingdom of God. Both involve growth and this growth gives a benefit.

In the first parable Jesus talks about someone who scatters seed on the ground. The seed, once on the ground, grows of its own accord. Jesus infers that whilst the person has scattered the seed, it is God who has enabled the seed to grow. He says that day by day, the person sleeps and rises, and the seed grows without the person doing anything more than placing it.

When we are a “New Creation”, we are called to be like the person who sows the seed. We do God’s will by learning more about God ourselves, by living God’s way, and by sharing the Good News of Jesus with others, but we need to know that we have to rely on God to provide the growth.

This can be hard for us. The society around us, tells us that we have to get what we want, and we have to do what we want, and we’re responsible for what happens.

Being “in Christ” means we are called to seek to do what God wants and to leave the outcomes of our hard work in God’s hands.

In one sense this can be difficult because we are not in control, but I think if we take a step back and really look at this way of living it is liberating.

Yes, we are required to live into our Christian lives with honesty and with integrity, but we are not responsible for the growth that occurs. We are free not to worry about the growth. We entrust the growth into God’s hands.

In Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians today we are told,

“for we walk by faith, not by sight”

We just have to live faithfully. God will provide the growth.

In the second parable Jesus talks about a mustard seed. Jesus describes how small a mustard seed is, and yet when it grows into a shrub it provides home and shelter for the birds of the air.

I would like to offer two insights from this parable.

Firstly, that our faith just needs to be there. The mustard seed is small. We don’t need to have all the answers when we begin. We just have to be faithful and keep trusting God.

And secondly, the growth from our faith should be providing a benefit for others and not just for ourselves. The mustard shrub didn’t just produce more mustard shrubs. The mustard shrub provided a shelter for the birds. As we look at the growth in our lives, we need to ask the question, how am I seeking to be a positive part of my community and how am I seeking to help others.

Just as the mustard seed was able to grow into a shrub to provide shelter for the birds, the growth in our lives should be good for us, and it should also be good for those around us.

When we think about how growth occurs in plants, we can see how the analogy fits with our Christian faith:-

It is only when a seed dies, that the new plant begins to grow.  
If we die with Jesus, we become a new creation.  
We are transformed to live new lives for Jesus.  
And in the transformation we will see growth.  
Sometimes this needs to happen again and again in our lives.

### Conclusion

So today I hope I have convinced you that you are a “New Creation”.

You may not feel like it physically, but you can know it spiritually, and you can be assured that nothing can take God’s presence away from you.

And I hope that in knowing you are a “New Creation”, you will be encouraged to continue to grow, more and more, in the knowledge and love of God.

That the growth you see will be good for you and for others.

And that growing will be something that you will strive for, and embrace as a wonderful part of your life with God. Amen.