

New Creation

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

The First Church of Christ in Hartford

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I had intended something different for this morning, but the events of the past few days sent me back to the Second Letter to the Corinthians again for a re-do. Let me read you this text from a different translation (From The Message)

These things happened this week as I thought on this text:

- Attorney General of the US Jeff Sessions, quoting the Bible as justification, and just before Father's Day, doubled down on denying asylum to victims of violence and separating children from their fathers and mothers entering this country to apply for asylum or without papers.
- At our Conference Annual Meeting yesterday we passed a resolution to work together to end bullying toward LGBTQ people, largely focused on youth. We heard an adult story, however, about a trans woman, sitting quietly on a train, who found herself surrounded by men pointing at her saying, "What is it?" She obviously was terrified and felt fortunate to escape without violence.
- We also passed a resolution denouncing acts of violence, hatred and racism carried out in the name of ne-Nazi and white supremacist ideologies. In 2018, I can't believe we even have to say this.
- As the #MeToo movement continues to empower women, we read in the Courant of a professor at CCSU who harassed and assaulted students for years with only slaps on the wrist.

Let me read to you again those words of Paul as you ponder with me on these things. (again, from The Message).

Paul sometimes gets a bad rap in attitudes toward women, but remember he also was the one who wrote that in Christ there is no male or female, slave or free, Jew or Gentile: no labeling around gender, nationality, social class: for all are one in Christ Jesus. Here, in the Second Letter to the church at Corinth, a church we know to have been divided by all these things, we find Paul not only saying that all that stuff is garbage, but that **our role as Christians** is to proclaim it so, to be ambassadors, Christ's representatives, whose job is reconciling those divided by such false boundaries. Reconciling people with God, who can clear our minds and eyes to experience each other in such a way as to reconcile our human differences.

Now I am not going to get into a Bible throwdown with Jeff Sessions, but I'm, pretty sure that the overwhelming message from the prophets and Jesus and even Paul is what Paul writes just a little farther into the letter that the Attorney General quoted on Thursday. Paul writes "Love your neighbor as yourself" is the summary of the Law. "Love does not wrong to a neighbor—therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

That is a much higher standard than federal policies. And it is not an easy standard to meet. It's easier just to pass the buck and say, "well, it's the policy of the government so what can I do?" It might take a "leap of faith" to hew to that higher standard.

Or it might take something a bit easier. Jesus doesn't actually talk about "leaps" of faith. He talks about small seeds being planted and trusting God will see to the growth. He talks about single steps of faith into the waters. I have read recently that scientists believe that severe stress in a parent can cause negative reverberations in DNA down multiple generations. In our DNA! So that got me to wondering. Would waves of love surrounding someone also cause changes in DNA down generations? Would planting small seeds in our lives and in our church and in our work and everywhere altar

generations to come? Paul says it is our JOB as Christians to transform the world by love and reconciliation, one seed at a time.

You may have noticed that the quote at the beginning of the bulletin today comes from a phrase popularized by the feminist movement in the 1960's and 70's: "A woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle." In other words, not at all. It's a funny image and meant to be empowering to women, reminding them that in themselves they are enough!

But here's the thing: we all need each other. We need each other to be supportive and open and understanding and looking beyond boundaries of physical appearance, nationality, ethnicity or sexual orientation. We need to be **fish** for each other; not giving bicycles to those who don't need them, but learning more about each other's fish-ness and human need and identity. We must resist requiring someone else to confirm to our reality, but overcome our own self-imposed identity boundaries to claim oneness in Christ with those bereft fathers and mothers and children at the border, and that harassed trans woman on the train, and victims of sexual and racial violence here in Hartford and everywhere in the world. And to invite them to be one with us. We need to be those who re-install reconciliation in the DNA of the human race.

Beloved, it is planting season. Let us claim our call from God and get to work. Amen.