

Columbia, Missouri
The Worship of God • September 18, 2022



THE SCRIPTURE
2 Corinthians 5:16-21

From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we no longer know him in that way. So, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; look, new things have come into being! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So, we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ: be reconciled to God. For our sake God made the one who knew no sin to be sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

THE MESSAGE
“You Are Here: New”
Mark Briley

“Whatcha up to these days?” “Same old stuff.” How often have you had that conversation? Sometimes it’s just small talk. It’s a thing to say. “Same ol,’ same ol” we quip off as if to say, “Everything in my life is normal, predictable, and routine.”

That can be really comforting. Sometimes, however, we intentionally make changes in our lives. And sometimes, when the “same old stuff” is no longer an option, you gain new perspective on the spiritual idea Paul shares with us: *“See, everything has become new.”*

In many ways, we lump the idea of “new” in with *change*, *unknown* and *fear*. Those partnered words may be fair when it comes to attempting “new” on our own. This line in Scripture, however, is prefaced with the extremely important, “***If Christ is involved, there will be a new thing.***” And... if Christ is involved, the edge of change, the unknown and fear can find their way to the sidelines. But that’s so cliché, right? Take this pill and lose 20 pounds. Try this hair remover once and never mess with cheap razors ever again. Learn this technique and you, too, can be rich in just 17 days. Get Christ in you and all the old, bad, troublesome stuff will vanish – all for three easy installments of your tithe check and a couple Hail Mary’s.

“***NEW! NEW! You too can be new!***” I don’t know. We’re not that naïve, right? I was praying for this sort of newness coming out of the pandemic. Re-invention. Emotionally, spiritually, physically – New! It’s a scripturally based desire.

Nicodemus says, “*Can a grown man change? Be made new?*” Jesus says, “*It can be done.*” A man encounters Philip biking along the KT trail and gets to talking about Jesus and he asks, “*Anything stopping me from being baptized in the Missouri?*” Philip says, “*I don’t see why not? You can be new now.*” Paul is minding his own business on Damascus Blvd. and has a head on collision with Jesus. A few days recovery and his whole lifestyle changed. So, I’m thinking – Why not me?

But the dramatic stories make the headlines, right? Not mine. It’s Jaylen Watson’s story.¹ Not mine. Did you see this? Chiefs defensive back makes the pivotal play of the game on Thursday night, intercepting Justin Herbert’s pass on the goal line and returning it 99 yards for what proved to be a game clinching score. Just his second game in the NFL. Three years ago, he was working at a Wendy’s restaurant where his mom was the manager. He was making \$7.50 an hour pouring Frosty’s, wondering if he could get his grades in order enough to have a shot at playing football again. He was resilient and determined; worked his way into school and into a new opportunity. And when his number was called to start on Thursday as the Chiefs’ first round draft pick was out due to injury, he called home and made sure there was a hometown crowd in Arrowhead Stadium for his NFL debut. Did his boss from Wendy’s make the trip? “*Yes, my Mom showed up,*” Watson said. “*Not my boss from Wendy’s.*” All things new for Watson. What not me?



¹ <https://www.kansascity.com/sports/spt-columns-blogs/vahe-gregorian/article265884191.html>

So, we're in this frontier moment, emerging from the pandemic, and about a year ago, I was asking, "*How do I wake up and allow the old things to pass away and everything to become new?*" I figured you just get started. A new hairstyle maybe? Lots of people were experimenting with facial hair and what not. I dabbled a little but, new? Probably not. A lady in my student church once said to me, "*You'll never be a minister with hair like that.*"

When you do something new there will always be some naysayers. What else? I wobbled – learned some extra dance moves to that classic wedding reception dance number. Maybe you whipped and nae nae'd. Are you new? I'm tracking all these rings and steps and standing up and down things on my watch now. Am I new? Hard to say.

I joined a running club once. That was new! Every club, group, team, organization has its own culture and flavor, right? I didn't consider myself a runner. What was I doing joining a running club? And what if I didn't do all the things right ... or know when to stop or go or get all the terms right associated with the sport and club itself. It gave me great appreciation for any of you exploring life in a church for the first time. I felt very welcomed, and I think Coach Nate received me as a big challenge – you know, "*If I can make a runner out of that guy, I'm really doing something.*" He says to me and my rookie status: "*You're a runner now. You're not just a runner when you're running. You're a runner all of the time. Your posture, your food intake, you're rest... you do all of those things now as a runner.*"

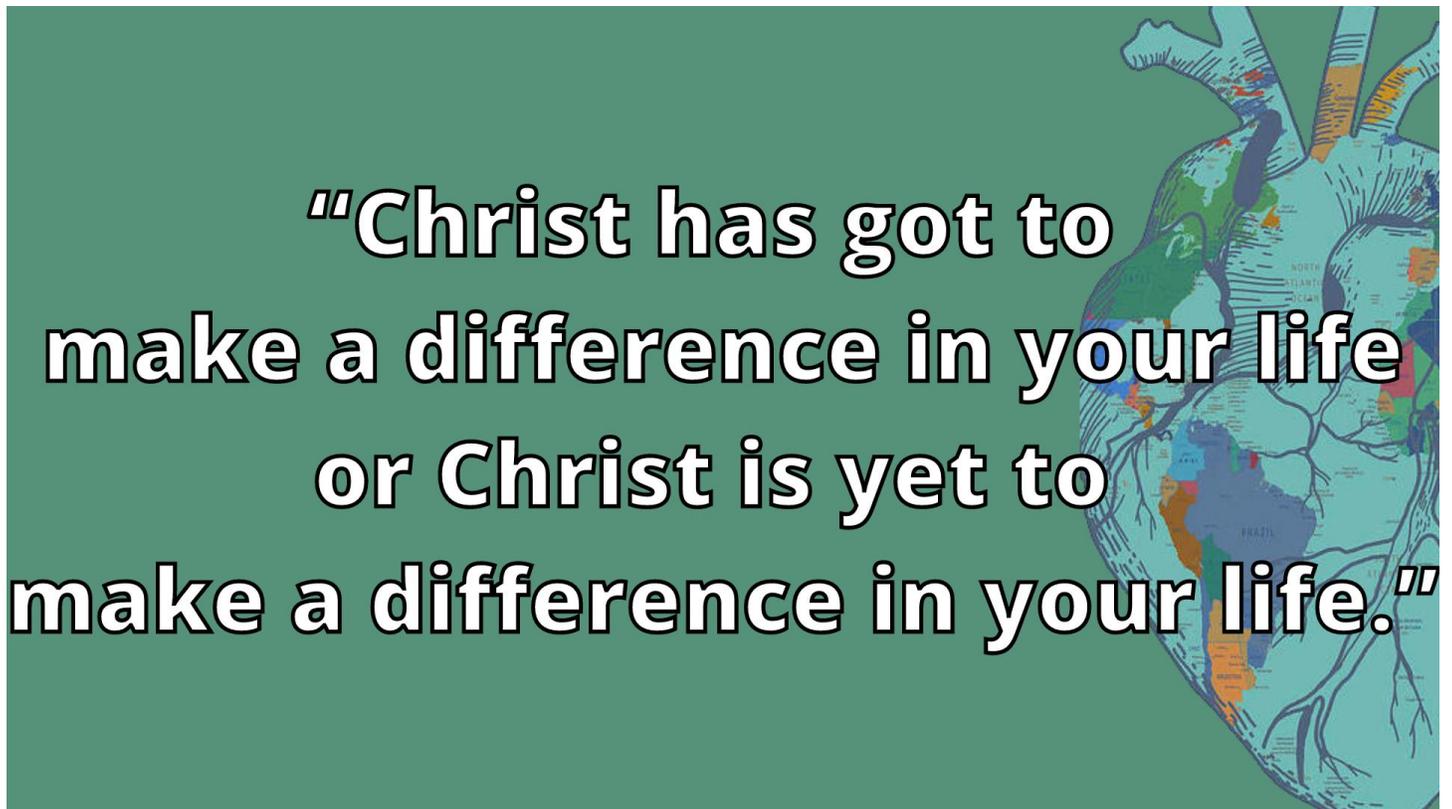
And this, my friends, must be what Paul is talking about in our passage for today. "*You're a Christ-follower now... and not just when you're sitting in worship but everything in your life is now new. Your posture, your intake, your work, your communication... now through the lens of being a Christ-follower.*" There is a new standard by which you move and operate. It's not perfect. It's not a works-righteousness mentality. You'll fail if you try to master the check list. That's some of the fear, right? Can I do it right? I was talking about this with a study group one time and the famous line from this passage says, "*If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation, the old has passed away.*" The first retort was, "*Is everything new? Has everything of my old standard passed away? Then why am I still a jerk sometimes?*" "*Everything old has passed away?*" "*Whelp, it didn't.*"

It's a lifelong process, right? The Corinthian Church gave Paul, their founding pastor, more trouble than all the other churches he started combined. He'd get one thing on track. and then another program would run off the rails. It's the perfect example for any of us who think the newness of life in Christ is as easy as taking a pill.

Eugene Peterson wrote this about this particular letter of Paul's: "*For anyone operating under the naïve presumption that joining a Christian Church is a good way to meet all*

*the best people and cultivate smooth social relations, a reading of Paul's Corinthian correspondence is the prescribed cure."*²

The change involved to become "new" is just as much work for Christians as anyone. Jesus, himself, never said that following him was the easiest road. It is the road *less* travelled. Life is quick to tell you that you don't have time to change... to become new. Even your friends will tell you that you can't change or that you shouldn't mess with changing. But I've got to go with Paul on this one: "*If Christ is involved, there will be a new thing.*" Someone else said it this way:



It's not a given. You've got to work at it. I'm not giving you the bait and switch here. It's a daily effort, and some days you're not going to get there. Our flesh will always tip to the world, but our Spirit in Christ will always tip to the kingdom. In every moment, we feed one of those more than the other – the flesh or the Spirit. One of my friends runs this mantra through his head throughout the day to keep him focused: "*God is faithful and working in my life. God is faithful and working in my life.*"

Find a mantra that you can keep present in your mind when you need it most. Tough stuff will enter our lives that are outside of our control. This very week as I catch up with your stories... weighty stories of new challenges you are facing... I'm aware of

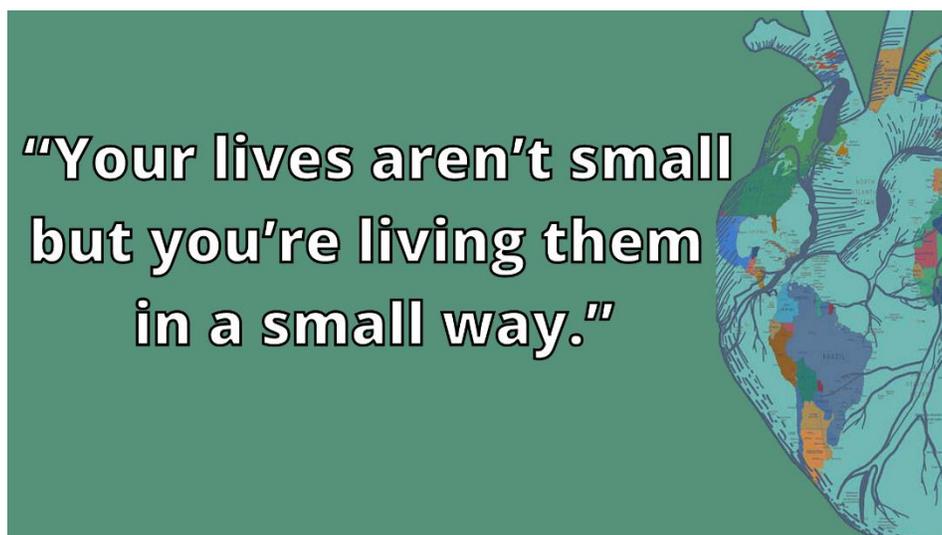
² The Message. Eugene Peterson. NavPress. 2002. This line pulled from Peterson's introduction to II Corinthians.

how hard it is to become new when you're just trying to get through. And to a person I was inspired... for your perspective, your insight, your mentality. You're not fluffing it over as no big deal. There are crushing moments from these encounters with life's realities, but I can tell you hold a mantra like "*God is faithful and working in my life.*" You blow me away... and this is why communities inspire. We sharpen each other. We carry each other. We find newness together even amid life's greatest heartbreaks.

This ministry of reconciliation that Paul says is entrusted to us is not only about healing the hurts and the relationships that are bruised and battered. It's about holding one another through the tough stuff... because I can't be made new if I'm not helping your quest for newness, and you can't be made new without encouraging me through my efforts to become new, too. That's why we come to church. We don't come to church to simply '*do church.*' We come to church to be part of a greater purpose. We come to work on being new, being changed. It's beyond personal... it's a place where *you* and *me* become **us**. It's a place where the old slowly shifts out of priority for the new priority that is stepping behind and toward and in line with the way of Christ comes into focus.

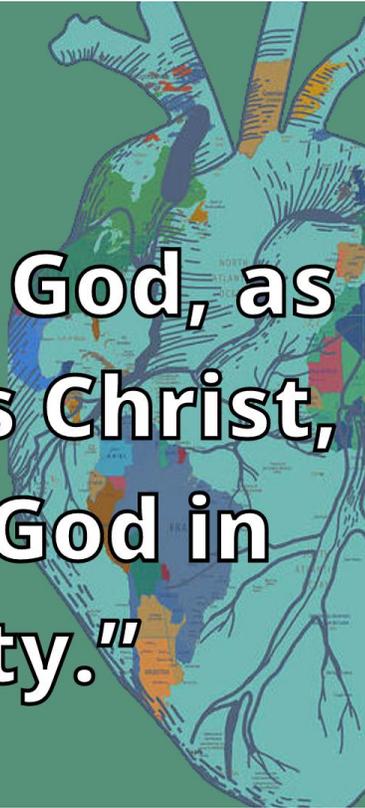
It's about vision. I used to see things through the vision of the world, but now I see things through the vision of Christ. That's how I'm becoming new. I look at my spouse with new love. I interact with my kids with a growing awe and a strengthening patience. I look at my boss and my colleagues with new compassion. I see the stranger as simply someone I don't have any stories with yet. They are not to be feared or shunned or seen as anything less than a child of God with whom I could become more new-like in Christ by sharing stories with them. I look at menial tasks with a new sense of importance for it all plays a role in bringing about the good, the new.

I love the way the *Message* translates a verse following our focus passage today. It's 2nd Corinthians chapter six and Paul says,



Your lives aren't small but you're living them in a small way. Paul sort of goes for the jugular, doesn't he. It was his motivational style. Sometimes that's what we need. I'm a long-haul guy. I'm an extra grace-giver knowing that the newness will come if we keep after it but by golly, sometimes, I need to read that line to myself and get on with it. My life isn't small, it isn't inconsequential, it isn't isolated, but I'm thinking small. I'm thinking that today's choices don't affect tomorrow's possibilities. I'm isolating myself because I'm afraid or uncertain or discouraged. But what am I capable of that I don't even know yet? *God is faithful and working in my life. God is faithful and working in my life.* Something new can come yet.

All this talk of change and the new landscape of religion in America post-pandemic, and what will Broadway do to be on the leading front of this new frontier season ahead of us as a church has us talking more and more. We've got to have these prayerful conversations. You're asking good questions and we're praying for good and healthy movement forward. We're trying to ensure our structure doesn't hinder our mission which is what?

An anatomical illustration of a human heart, rendered in shades of blue and teal. A world map is overlaid on the heart, with various countries highlighted in different colors like green, orange, and red. The heart's major blood vessels are visible at the top.

"... to enable persons to encounter the living God, as disclosed through Jesus Christ, to serve and celebrate God in an ever changing society."

I got to hang with one of our founding members this week, and George chatted me up about that early frontier 64 years ago when Broadway was planted out here. "Most of us came from a single Sunday School class at First Christian," he said. "We were the young(ish) adults. Many of us just coming out of military service." They prayed and

discerned and ultimately decided, *“Let’s go for it. We want to start a new church.”* And George chuckled as he said, *“And the leaders didn’t think it was the **worst** idea.”*

We’re always going to have some mixed opinions about how we become new, right? George spoke about that big, core group with the youthful energy and zeal to go and grow and yet with a few older, more experienced pioneers who were willing to support the energetic 20 and 30 somethings with their wisdom and resource to see if this new movement could fly. George said, *“I look back at it and think, ‘There were a lot of ways we could have failed.’”* But... in Christ... there was a new thing. I asked George about today’s frontier movement – maybe not unlike that first frontier season he and our charter members embraced. We noted how our church now has a bigger core group of experienced followers, wise and influential while we have much fewer of those 20-30 somethings with the energy and hope to grow a new thing in Christ today. George said as I paraphrase, *“You’ve got to figure out how to make space for the new.”*

Do we have it in us? Whew. New creation? Me? You? Us? Are we afraid? I shared in my newsletter article this past week, the autobiography a man wrote when challenged to sum it all up in six words. After pondering and sweating it out, he eventually offered his autobiography in the form of a question: *“What if we weren’t afraid anymore?”* Those six words have stuck with me. They make me curious about my own life. They invite me to check my fears. What do I fear when it comes to my family, my health, my job, my faith? You’ve got some answers to those questions, I’m sure. I certainly have been thinking about them. What do we do with those fears?

Penn State University conducted a research study about worry – which is a cousin to fear. They asked participants to write down every worry that came to their mind over a set period of time. They were then asked to note how many of those identified worries came to pass. Only one out of ten worries came to fruition in some way. Even that single worry that came to pass most often did so with much less severity than the original worry imagined it might. 90% of the time, the things we worry about the most never come to pass. And yet, we spend so much of our energy caught up, if not lost, in worry and fear. Someone said this past week: *“What you worry about the most reveals where you trust God the least.”* I’m not sure about all of that but I’ve been letting it soak in my soul this week.

We’re living in a frontier season as a church family – and not just our family at Broadway – but every church – every mission outpost everywhere. It’s a whole new world, and we get to be part of the frontier effort. I’ve lamented this at times and fretted it at others. But I’m trusting more and more that we are up for this Broadway. Our city is counting on us. Our neighbors need us to thrive and grow and be a presence that lives on the new edge of hope. I anticipate 2023 being an extremely intentional year of re-centering us. I see us honing our focus... giving up some good things for the best thing

for our church family in this new season. Like Scott Krippayne used to sing, “*The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.*”³ In Christ... there is a new creation. What a gift!

You may be new to this whole Jesus thing, or you may have a pew chair in this place that has held your name for four, five, even six decades. Whatever the case... make a move, join a new group, pray a new prayer, serve a new neighbor... that’s how this newness comes about. Talking with some of you this week about the newness ahead of us, I loved when one of you said, “*We don’t get to just sit and wait for Jesus to happen to us.*” I love the spiritual wrestling we’re doing to get in this newness mentality. We become new in partnership with the Spirit of Christ. We make a move, and we sense the Spirit in new ways because we’ve encountered the Spirit in a new way. How will you move?

We are here. Where will we go from here? Next time someone asks you, “*Whatcha up to these days?*” instead of saying “*Same ol,’ same ol’*”, maybe you can answer, “*All things new.*” When they ask you what you mean, well, you can tell them.

May it be so.

BROAD HEARTS BROAD MINDS BROAD REACH

³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MZA1aFsIs4I>