

Life Link

Countdown: Fractal1

Music Video: Sing

Sermon Illustration: January

Sermon Title: "All Things Are New"

2 Cor 5:16-19 Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 18 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

NKJV

Text Illustration:

THE REFINER'S FIRE

The story is told of a group of women that met for Bible study. While studying in the book of Malachi, chapter three, they came across verse three which says: "He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver." This verse puzzled the women and they wondered how this statement applied to the character and nature of God. One of the women offered to find out more about the process of refining silver, and to get back to the group at their next Bible study.

The following week, the woman called up a silversmith and made an appointment to watch him while at work. She didn't mention anything about the reason for her interest, beyond her curiosity about the process of refining silver.

As she watched the silversmith work, he held a piece of silver over the fire and let it heat up. He explained that in refining silver, one needed to hold the silver in the middle of the fire, where the flames were the hottest as to burn away all the impurities.

The woman thought about God holding us in such a hot spot, then she thought again about the verse, that "He sits as a refiner and purifier of silver."

She asked the silversmith if it was true that he had to sit there in front of the fire the entire time the silver was being refined. The man answered yes, that not only did he have to sit there holding the silver, but he had to keep his eyes on it the entire time it was in the fire. If the silver was left even a moment too long in the flames, it would be destroyed.

The woman was silent for a moment. Then she asked the silversmith, "But how do you know when the silver is fully refined?"

He smiled at her and answered, "Oh, that's easy--when I see my image in it."

I. If Anyone Is In Christ, He Is A New Creation

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. NKJV

Mal 3:2-3 "But who can endure the day of His coming?
And who can stand when He appears?
For He is like a refiner's fire
And like launderers' soap.
3 He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver;
He will purify the sons of Levi,
And purge them as gold and silver,
That they may offer to the Lord
An offering in righteousness. NKJV
Psalms 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
NKJV

Ezekiel 11:19 Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, NKJV

Ezekiel 18:31 Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel?
NKJV

Ezekiel 36:26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. NKJV

Matthew 12:33 <A Tree Known by Its Fruit>
(Matt 7:15-20)

33 "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. NKJV

John 3:3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." NKJV

Galatians 6:15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. NKJV

Ephesians 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.
NKJV

Text Illustration:

VIEW EVERYONE AS GOD'S CREATION

Presbyterian biblical scholar/ minister/author Carl Howie tells about an incident that took place in a New York subway. It was winter, and an especially cold and bitter night. Very few people were on the subway at that hour. At each station, the train would screech to a halt, open its doors, allowing a few people to come and go.

At one station, a peculiar woman got on. Her clothes were ragged and dirty. She was either extremely tired or extremely drunk. As the train lurched forward, she stumbled and fell into a seat and went fast asleep. Through the screeching and swaying of the train, she slept, her hands nestled inside two tattered worn-out gloves. It was hard to see how those gloves, full of holes, would help at

all. How could she go anywhere in that bitter cold without freezing her hands? Few people in the train could take their eyes off this homeless person, asleep on the subway, her gloved hands without gloves.

Then a strange thing happened. A young Puerto Rican boy got up to get off the train as it slowed to a stop. He could have gone out the exit closest to him, but he went by the sleeping woman instead. He paused by her for a few moments, removed his gloves, laid them on her lap, and got off the train.

It is easy to judge everyone – there are enough faults to go around. Choosing to see everyone as a child of God, created in His image, will help me look past the homelessness, age, beauty, intelligence, opinions, the differences between myself and others. Seeing children of God, I can be more compassionate, more responsive to needs and less responsive to my judgmental prejudices. (Source: HomileticsOnline.com. From a sermon by Russell Brownworth, "Stumbling Stones or Building Blocks - Your Choice!" 1/30/2009)

II. Reconciled to God Through Christ Jesus

2 Corinthians 5:18

18 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, NKJV

Leviticus 6:30

30 But no sin offering from which any of the blood is brought into the tabernacle of meeting, to make atonement in the holy place, shall be eaten. It shall be burned in the fire. NKJV

Daniel 9:24 "Seventy weeks are determined

For your people and for your holy city,
To finish the transgression,
To make an end of sins,
To make reconciliation for iniquity,
To bring in everlasting righteousness,
To seal up vision and prophecy,
And to anoint the Most Holy. NKJV

Romans 5:1 <Faith Triumphs in Trouble> Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, NKJV

Romans 5:10-11 For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. 11 And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation. NKJV

Ephesians 2:16 and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. NKJV

Colossians 1:20-21 and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. 21 And you,

who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled NKJV

Hebrews 2:17 17 Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. NKJV

1 John 2:2 And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.
NKJV

1 John 4:10

10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. NKJV

Text Illustration:

Jehovah-Shalom: The Lord Send Peace (Judges 6:24)

Jesus! whose blood so freely stream'd
To satisfy the law's demand;
By Thee from guilt and wrath redeem'd,
Before the Father's face I stand.
To reconcile offending man,
Make Justice drop her angry rod;
What creature could have form'd the plan,
Or who fulfill it but a God?
No drop remains of all the curse,
For wretches who deserved the whole;
No arrows dipt in wrath to pierce
The guilty, but returning soul.
Peace by such means so dearly bought,
What rebel could have hoped to see?
Peace, by his injured Sovereign wrought,
His Sovereign fasten'd to a tree.
Now, Lord, Thy feeble worm prepare!
For strife with earth, and hell begins;
Confirm and gird me for the war;
They hate the soul that hates his sins.
Let them in horrid league agree!
They may assault, they may distress;
But cannot quench Thy love to me,
Nor rob me of the Lord my peace.

(Source: Olney Hymns, William Cowper, from Cowper's Poems, Sheldon & Company, New York [Galaxie Software. (2002; 2002). 10,000 Sermon Illustrations. Biblical Studies Press.])

III. Committed To Us The Word of Reconciliation

2 Corinthians 5:19

19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

NKJV

1. God Was in Christ

John 14:10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works.
NKJV

John 17:23 I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. NKJV

2. Reconciling The World To Himself

Rom 3:24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,
NKJV

1 John 2:1 <The Test of Knowing Christ>

2 My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. NKJV

1 John 4:10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. NKJV

Text Illustration:

MERCY ME: HOLD FAST

Mercy Me is a Christian band (I Can Only Imagine) and recently they sang a song called, "Hold Fast." Bart Millard tells the story of the inspiration for "Hold Fast":

"I was standing in the back of the bus going to our next concert. We were in a traffic jam and we passed a horrible wreck. I kept praying that the people in that wreck would just hold on until help would arrive."

Guideposts sponsors an outreach on the internet through a web site called, "Our Prayer." They post prayer requests on that web site and frequently I pray over those. This past week they had a desperate cry for prayer from a lady that stuck with me. She requested prayer that she get a job so that she could leave her mother's house. She has been unemployed for several months and had to move back in with her mother. None of her family are Christians and they constantly belittle her for her faith. Her husband left her a few years ago. She frequently goes to her room at her mother's house and cries. Being a new Christian she is trying to make friends with people at her church but has been unable. She is bankrupt financially and emotionally. Ever since she has come to faith in Christ, things have not been easy. The preacher at her church recently started a series on "restoration and reconciliation," and this just seems to add salt to her wounds. She tries to be reconciled to her family but every move just seems to make things worse. She doesn't feel restored at all because she has nothing. She asked the question, "I think I will go back to my old way of life. At least then I was on my own, and no one made fun of me."

As I prayed for this lady, all I could think of was the words of "Hold Fast" from Mercy Me.

To everyone who's hurting
To those who've had enough
To all the undeserving

That should cover all of us
Please do not let go
I promise there is hope
Hold fast Help is on the way
Hold fast He's come to save the day
What I've learned in my life
One thing greater than my strife
Is His grasp
So hold fast