

2016 already seems old. Even though we are only two months into the new year it seems old. The new beginnings, the new hopes, the new dreams have almost faded into obscurity. Have we been fooled? Was the writer of Ecclesiastes right? “...*there is nothing new under the sun*” (1:9b). Yet, we still long for a new day, a new beginning.

Paul writes to the congregation in Corinth that in Christ we have become a new creation. Each day for us is a new day, a new beginning. We are remade and remolded into God’s image for us. If that is so, then what is the image we need to be projecting?

We begin with Joshua, the journey continues for Israel but it is now a new day. The forty (40) years of wandering have come to an end. They are no longer wandering about the desert/wilderness. They no longer need a daily supply of manna to fall from heaven. They are now eating the foods grown in the land. They are beginning the cycle of planting and harvesting. Something new — this generation has not planted and harvested ever! They now have a place to call home. The promise of God has been fulfilled.

As the new day begins they are filled with hope. However, history tells us that they will soon forget the journey that got them to this place. They will remember the manna but forget the one who gave it to them. They will stray after other gods. They will not become a people who are under the hand of God. As hard as they might try other gods will entice them. They may long for the manna, the promise but... They will stand again in need of rescue, forgiveness and redemption.

We are now a new creation. Christ has come and the Law fades and is replaced by love, forgiveness and grace. The separation that began in Eden has been mended. A bridge has been built. Paul says that we are now reconciled back to God. What we could not do - Christ has done. We no longer need to be in fear as we approach the dwelling place of God. We are not met with lightning and thunder. The “keep away” signs are gone. Like the Prodigal we find arms open wide to welcome and embrace us. We are restored, reconciled and there is a party. Our past is gone — we have a new beginning.

Paul puts it this way, “*Our sins are no longer counted against us.*” Our debt has been paid. Canceled, paid in full. Our accounts have been reconciled and there is no balance due. We have a fresh start - a new day, a new beginning. In the Narnia series, in The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, the travelers come upon an island where three of their companions are sitting at a table with a banquet before them—they are in a deep sleep. The adventurers do not dare to taste in case it was the food that put them in the trance. They decide to spend the night and see what happens in the morning. The morning comes and the table is renewed. It is made new every morning, they discover. Those who are asleep have never tasted of it. They would be welcome to but they have chosen not to. The table is before us and it is our choice to taste or not.

Paul states that we have been reconciled to become reconcilers. We are called to a ministry of reconciliation. This was and is the ministry of Christ. Who, not holding our sins against us, died that we might live. He sought and seeks to restore us back to the family. He is the example we are called to follow. He looked beyond our faults, our sin and calls us to begin anew. He calls us to be renewed each day. He invites us to come to the Table - a Table renewed each day. And to enter into a ministry of reconciliation.

Max Lucado in, It’s Not About Me, devotes a chapter to the idea of reconciliation and forgiveness: grace. He notes that we often try to change God’s recipe. We struggle with the concept of grace and want to add more. We think that there must be more, something left out

from the original. Yes, we know but... In order to really be forgiven you have to do this or that. We want to tinker with God's recipe/formula. There has to be more than just acceptance of the gift. You have to do something more. Paul shouts, NO! It is a gift. It is grace. Christ has paid all that needs to be paid. We are not called to make it more difficult. We are not asked to add to it.

What we are called to do is to offer the gift to whoever would receive it. We are called to a ministry of reconciliation. If Christ does not count our sins against us, we cannot count the sins of others. Nor are they to count ours. They are gone - we have been forgiven. Today is a new day - we are new in Christ.

As we come to this Table we need to be reminded of the gift we have received from Christ. And, of our calling to be a people of reconciliation. As God's arms are open wide for us to welcome us home - our arms need to be open wide to welcome all who come to the invitation Christ offers. To all who would come.

In Paul's words: *"And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."*

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NIV, New International Bible Society, Zondervan, 1973, 1978, 1985

NRSV, Division of Christian Education, NCC, 1989

Lucado, Max, It's Not About Me, Integrity Publishers, Brentwood, TN, 37027 (2004)

Lewis, C.S., Voyage of the Dawn Treader, Collier Books, NY, NY 10022 (1952)