

## The Third Sunday after Pentecost (6-13-2021)

“If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation. Everything old has passed away. See, everything has become new.”

Everything has become new. Really? Does that match up with our experience?

Because honestly, most of the time, I don't feel much like a new creation. Plenty of the old me is still sticking around, annoying me and everyone else.

My grandson loves music. He was here this weekend, so he's very fresh on my mind. And he loves my piano, but mostly he likes to bang on it. I sit down to play a piece and he promptly comes over to help me. One day he asked about the music notes, the music in front of me. He was pointing it out and said, “What's that grandma?” And I said, “Well, you know, you're learning the letters of the alphabet and they make words, and the words make stories. Those notes are like the letters of the alphabet. They tell me what to play and you put it all together and it makes the music.” So now every time he sits down at the piano, he points at the music and tells me he wants to play that piece.

Yesterday, Brian persuaded him to let me play alone for just a few minutes. But as I was playing, I heard him humming along, trying to imitate the tune. When I was done, he came and sat by my side, and I thought, *he's curious. I'm just going to see what we can do here.* And I played the melody for Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star. I showed him how to play the first few notes. “OK, that one twice and that one twice and that one twice.” He did just a few first notes and then he went back to banging on the piano. Did he learn anything? Who knows? But maybe a seed was planted.

Jesus compares God's reign to a seed growing secretly. And we know that the seed has been planted, but we don't always see the growth. So much happens underground.

That's where the seed germinates and breaks open and sends out its first little rootlets and spreads those tiny roots out into the soil. All that happens before we see anything at the surface. And then it begins pushing up toward the daylight. Those of you who are gardeners know that the first leaves that show above the ground often don't even look like the plant that will be. It would be easy to mistake them for weeds.

Have you ever watched children learning how to play soccer? It's entertaining. There's a fair amount of kicking and missing the ball entirely, tripping and falling, connecting with the ball, but sending it in entirely the wrong direction, and just plain running around.

If you watch a child learning, it may look as if nothing is happening, as if they are making no progress at all. They just keep swinging and missing. And then suddenly one day they get it. They're running and passing and making goals. And you think how did that happen?

Now, the truth is that not every child is going to become skilled at soccer. But they will become skilled at something that they initially failed at. That's the process of learning and growing. There is a whole lot of failure along the way.

I see this process all the time with grown-ups, too, as they deal with the problems and challenges of adult life -- maybe healing from a difficult childhood or healing from a traumatic incident or just working on becoming more loving, compassionate people. The desire is there, the openness to growth is there somewhere. But progress from day to day can be so slow that it's invisible. Until suddenly ... wow ... dramatic change. I've seen that in people who were working on healing. God is at work in each one of us and in our world, bringing the new creation, bringing the reign of God. It's already here among us, growing even when we can't see anything changing.

Like a newborn baby, it is something utterly new, full of promise and potential. But there are a lot of diaper changes, sleepless nights, temper tantrums, adolescent snits between this newborn and the person they will become. And any one of us who has known a baby knows that we cannot make that baby grow. It grows at its own rate and pace. We can only love it and do everything that we can to provide the right conditions for growth.

And that's where we are with this whole question of the reign of God. It's already here among us, growing. We can't make it grow. But we can love it and do our best to be part of it. And do everything that we can to make the conditions right in our own lives for its growth. God's new creation is already here, growing among us and within us. Sometimes it may feel like geologic growth, as if God is the Colorado River, just beginning to make an impression. But what becomes of that little indentation over time?

What does God make of that tiny little impression as it wears away year after year, as it becomes something awesome, something astounding and beautiful? The Grand Canyon. It took some time. It's all the more amazing as we look at the process that made it.

Paul reminds us of this promise of new creation, and we are called from now on not to regard anyone from a human point of view. God looks at each of us and sees what we will become. We're called to see with God's vision.

When you're frustrated with yourself and the slow progress that you're making, and you think, *God is anything changing at all?* When you look at someone else and think, *what is taking them so long? Why aren't they making more progress in therapy or whatever they're working on. Why can't they get their act together?* Remember, from now on, we regard no one from a human point of view. When you look at this world and feel like it is completely broken and nothing is ever going to change, remember God is at work. Most real and lasting change is slow, at least initially. But it comes. It comes.

Hold on to hope for yourself, for those you love, for this world. Trust in God's love and God's promise. The new creation is here. God is at work always. "If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation. Everything old has passed away. Everything has become new." Amen.