

Sermon preached by Canon Jim Holbeck at the Healing Service at St. Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney on Wednesday 4th January 2006. 2 Cor 5:11-21.
Topic: "Be Open For Changes In Your Life".

- If I were to say to you, "Happy New Year" it would be inadequate.
- Firstly because I am late in saying it as we are now 4 days into the New Year.
- But secondly it is inadequate because it gives the impression that I am happy for you to be happy.
- I want much more for you than that. I want you to become a more whole, healed, integrated person in every way.
- I want you to become the person God wants you to be and to be open for all the blessings He has for you.
- This passage tells us about "real" happiness in the plan and purpose of God. It comes through:-

1. Coming To A True Understanding Of The Character Of God

He is awesome.

a. The fear of the Lord. 5:11. *11 Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord*

- It doesn't mean a fear that makes us come in a cringing way towards God.
- Fear can mean the true sense of awe and reverence that we should have before a holy Almighty God.
- God in His word tells us to *approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.* Heb 4:16.
- It also tells us that we can have confidence *to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, Heb 4:19, AND in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him.* Eph 3:12.

... we persuade others. Knowing how majestic and holy is the Lord we have a duty to tell others about Him. We do it knowing the danger they are in if they haven't made peace with God through Jesus Christ.

- There comes a time for all of us when our rebellion against God and against His rule over us has to cease and we face up to God's claim on our lives.
- Peter preached about the commission given to God's people to share the gospel message with those who don't know the Lord. (*Acts 10:42*) *He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead.*
- And why? So that they would repent and turn to God for forgiveness. As Paul said Acts 17:30 *While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, 31 because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."*
- Everyone, everywhere in every generation is commanded to repent of their sin and turn to God for forgiveness.
- Jesus will either be their Saviour or their judge.

He is love.

b. The love of Christ. 5:14. *14 For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died ("Control" means to hem in, to press in from every side)*

He is talking about Christ's love for us rather than our love for Him as the following verses show. *14 For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; 15 and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.*

Our love for God can be a strong motivating factor in our lives but as John wrote, *We love him because He first loved us.*

It is recognising the love Christ has for us, that becomes our real motivation for living.

2. Coming To A True Understanding Of The Purpose Of Life

a. Not living for ourselves. 5:15. *15 and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves*

...

- The purpose of His death for us was that we might then come to the end of living lives centred on ourselves.

- Many people live as though the world is centred on them. It's the opposite to what Jesus taught us to pray in the Lord's Prayer, *Your kingdom come and Your will be done.*
- In our rebellion against God we are really saying *I'm the Lord of my life and I want my will to be done, in my way, in my time and for my benefit.*
- The purpose of living has to do with Him, not me.

b. Living for Christ. 5:15.live .. but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

If He died for us and He did, then we ought to live for Him.

He is meant to be the Lord of every aspect of our lives.

- He is meant to be the Lord of our time. Every moment to be lived for Him.
- He is meant to be the Lord of our money and possessions because He has redeemed us and we belong to Him, lock, stock and barrel.
- He is meant to be the Lord of every decision we make so that we are living for Him for the rest of our lives.
- He is meant to be the Lord of every relationship we have so that He controls every relationship.
- He is meant to be the Lord of our bodies so that what we do through them is pleasing in His sight.
- God has an interest in the bodies He has given us. Jesus in His ministry and the apostles and others in the NT were concerned to preach the gospel of the kingdom and to bring healing to those who were sick.
- Paul reminds us in Rom 12:1 *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship (or reasonable service).* It makes sense that if Jesus in His body died for us on a cross, we should live for Him in our bodies and not for ourselves.
- Has the purpose of God been fulfilled in your life at this time? Have you presented your body to Him so that He can do in and through your body what He wants to do?

3. Coming To An Awareness Of Being A New Creature In Christ

a. A new awareness of Who Christ is. 5:16. *16 From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer.*

- Paul like many others had misunderstood Jesus and saw Him as a dangerous imposter. But he discovered in his conversion experience that Christ was alive and that all His claims to be the Messiah and the Son of God were true.
- From that moment the rebellion ceased and he submitted to Christ as saviour and Lord.

b. A new awareness of who we are in Christ. 5:17. *17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*

- Paul knew what he was saying was true. He had experienced such a radical change in his life that he saw himself and every believer as a new creation.
- How could Paul express the “newness” of that conversion?
- He had 2 main words from which to choose to express “newness”. The first one was *neos* meaning recent or a newer version of the old.
- But he chose the word *kainos* meaning brand radically new. He knew he was a new creation by God not just an improvement on what he was before.
- The persecutor of the church had within days become the preacher of the church. For him the old had passed away and behold the new had come in his life.
- You and I need to recognise the radical work God has done in our lives by the power of His Holy Spirit and to live with the new wisdom and strength He gives us.

4. Coming Closer To Fulfilling God's Purpose For Us

a. Sharing the message of God's reconciling love. 5:19-20. *19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.*

- If you are a believer you are meant to share with others what God has done for you in Jesus Christ and how He can make others new people as well.
- You can, because the message is true. It is good news that people need to hear and many long to hear.

b. Becoming what God wants us to be. 5:21. *21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

- All the sin of the whole world was borne by Jesus and He bore the penalty of that sin in His death on the cross.
- Again for what purpose? *so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*
- It means more than just saying that we become righteous in God's eyes when we put our faith in Jesus.
- That is true but it means more than God saying to us before our conversion, "Guilty" and after our conversion "Acquitted, not guilty".
- Any short definition of the phrase *God's righteousness* is going to be inadequate but my short definition of God's righteousness is "*What God wants*".
- We become the righteousness of God when we become righteous in God's sight by receiving Jesus as our Saviour and Lord (that's what God wants for all of us) and by allowing God to do in us and through us what He wants.
- If we are holding anything back from God it is not what God wants. He wants - you. All of you.
- Why not present all you are to Him in a total commitment so that you might become what God wants you to be and by His grace say what God wants and do what God wants and be where God wants you to be in every area of your life.
- I believe that as you do that, God can bring you all the physical and emotional healing you need to be able to live for Him for the rest of your life.

A SUGGESTED PRAYER TO COMMIT ONE'S LIFE TO JESUS

The prayer below is taken from the booklet "*Two Ways To Live*" compiled by Phillip D Jensen and Tony Payne.

- The Booklet may be obtained from the Cathedral Bookshop in the North Porch of the Cathedral.
- The whole illustrated booklet which is an effective simple presentation of the gospel message may be seen on the internet on the following website:-
<http://www.matthiasmedia.com.au/2wtl/>

Dear God,

I know that I am not worthy to be accepted by you. I don't deserve your gift of eternal life. I am guilty of rebelling against you and ignoring you. I need forgiveness.

Thank you for sending your son to die for me that I may be forgiven.

Thank you that he rose from the dead to give me new life.

Please forgive me and change me that I may live with Jesus as my ruler. Amen