

Mystic Congregational Church, UCC

Mystic, Connecticut

Sermon from July 1, 2007

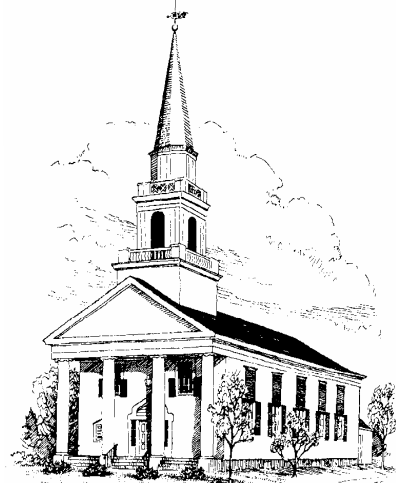
Rev. Barbara J. Libby

“A New Creation Is Everything”

Scriptures:

Psalm 30

Galatians 6:1-16



In our reading from the letter to the Galatians, Paul writes that “for neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything!” In 2 Corinthians (5:17), Paul says something quite similar when he writes “So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation—everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!” Clearly, Paul’s own experience of the transforming power of God’s love had changed his life!

Our Psalm for today also reminds us of a simple but profound truth—that God’s presence in our lives provides healing for each of us. No matter how our lives are filled with turmoil and trouble, no matter how seriously challenged at work or in our home lives, no matter how saddled we are with physical, emotional, or spiritual pain or illness, God is always there to provide the help we need. Both the psalmist and Paul agree that we can always give thanks and praise for God’s ongoing presence with us—for God’s healing power and God’s love for us gets us through all of life’s challenges.

Over and over in the Old and New Testament we hear testimonies to the power of the presence of God in our very human and very vulnerable lives. Psalm 51 suggests: “For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me ... Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.”

Each of us, at one time or another in our lives, yearn for the possibility of transformation right here in our hearts. Perhaps we also yearn to believe in the possibility of transformation right here in our heads as well.

The words of the psalmist invite us to remember that God’s power can transform us and bring us to a place where re-creation, where a new creation is possible! God can bring us to a place of new creation! God brings us healing, wholeness, and well-being—of heart, mind, and spirit!

Paul was always clear that it is in and through our relationship with the Risen Christ that the door is opened for each of us to be a New Creation, by God’s grace. Paul reminds us that it is “by doing what is right” that we can come even closer to the Christ who walks with us

through all our days and nights. Paul reminds us that we each have the opportunity to make a difference by working “for the good of all”.

Like Paul, the theologian W. Paul Jones says, “The Christian faith is not an ethic (doing) but a healing (being).” (p. 8 Weavings, *Hospitality Within and Without*, Jan/Feb’94)

Jones continues in this thought when he adds, “This radical purgation—of letting go, of being free of one’s self—takes a lifetime.” Working for the good of others, giving of our time and means for the good of others is simply what it is all about. Like Jesus, if we focus on the needs of others, we come closer and closer to God.

We can all be involved in transforming moments if we refocus and get our priorities straight. Hear this story: Like any good mother, when Karen found out that another baby was on the way, she did what she could to help her 3-year-old son, Michael, prepare for a new sibling. They found out that the new baby was going to be a girl and, day after day, night after night, Michael sang to his sister in mommy’s tummy.

The pregnancy progressed normally and then labor began. Pains came every five minutes and then every minute. Then complications arose during delivery. There were hours of labor and questions about whether surgery would be necessary. Then, finally, Michael’s sister was born. But the baby was in serious condition and she was whisked off to a neonatal intensive care unit in another hospital.

The days inched by. The little girl got worse. The pediatric specialist told the parents, “There is very little hope. Be prepared for the worst.” So Karen and her husband contacted a local cemetery about a burial plot. And they prepared for the worst. Michael, the 3-year-old brother, kept asking to see his sister saying, “I want to sing to her.”

Week two in intensive care: It looked as if a funeral would happen before the end of the week. Yet Michael kept nagging about singing to his sister but children weren’t allowed in the intensive care unit.

Finally, Karen made up her own mind. She would take Michael in to see his baby sister whether the staff liked it or not. If Michael did not get to see his sister now, he might never see her alive at all.

Karen dressed the little boy up in an oversized scrub suit and marched him into the intensive care unit. Michael looked like a walking laundry basket! Of course, the head nurse recognized he was a child immediately and bellowed, “Get that kid out of here now! No children are allowed in ICU!”

Karen, usually a mild-mannered woman, stood up to the steel-eyed head nurse saying, “He’s not leaving until he sings to his sister!” Karen towed Michael to his sister’s bedside. He gazed down at the tiny infant and he began to sing.

In the pure hearted voice of a 3-year-old, Michael sang,

*You are my sunshine, my only sunshine,
You make me happy when skies are gray ...*

Instantly, the baby girl responded. The pulse rate became calm and steady. “Keep on singing, Michael,” someone said.

*You never know, dear, how much I love you.
Please don't take my sunshine away.*

The ragged, strained breathing became as smooth as a kitten's purr. “Keep on singing, Michael.”

*The other night, dear, as I lay sleeping,
I dreamed I held you in my arms.*

Michael's little sister relaxed as healing rest swept over her. “Keep on singing, Michael.”

*You are my sunshine, my only sunshine.
Please, don't take my sunshine away.*

Funeral plans were scrapped. The next day, the very next day, the little girl was well enough to go home.

Woman's Day magazine called it “the miracle of a brother's song.” We might call it a miracle of God's transforming power. The simple truth is that we are, each one of us, invited by God to become a New Creation over the course of our lives. Our task is to be willing to be re-created and to willingly engage in the process of transformation from within that is available to each of us.

We gather here each Sunday for many different reasons—some come out of obligation, some come out of a sense of propriety, some come out of habit or tradition, some come out of a sense of need. Hopefully, we all come to hear about God's promises, to be reminded of our faith story, to weep and grieve for that which we have lost, to try to develop a stronger relationship with our Creator and Maker—the one who is embodied in the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit—Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer. We come here on a summer's day on this 1st day of July to meet our own needs and to pray and praise God as a community of believers and skeptics.

Be grateful for whatever brought you here today. Be grateful that whatever motivated you to come here today is perhaps helping you to become a new creation. Be grateful that you are here this day!

In a few minutes, all will be invited to come to this communion table. We come to this table to be reminded of some simple truths—Jesus died for each of us.

By Christ's death we are each offered the amazing possibility of transformation. As followers of Christ, God provides us a way to be re-created into something new. By coming to this table and by being fed at this table on the symbols of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, we *both* remember the sacrifice that Jesus made for us and we allow for the possibility of our

own transformation to happen.

Let us open our hearts, our minds, and our bodies to receive what god offers us! Let us open ourselves to the possibility of “a new creation which is everything”! Amen.