

## **Sermons at All Saints Anglican Church, Luxembourg**

**Preached by Rev Geoff Read on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2024**

**Bible text: 2 Cor 5:16-17**

The term “imposter syndrome” was first used in 1978 in an article called "The Impostor Phenomenon in High Achieving Women: Dynamics and Therapeutic Intervention" by Pauline R. Clance and Suzanne A. Imes.

Whilst an actual psychological syndrome affecting both women and men, the term is also used in popular language for those times when the confidence and success others see on the outside doesn't match the confidence we feel about ourselves on the inside

When will I be found out!?

If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new (2 Cor 5:17)

As I read Paul's closing words in our first reading, I sometimes feel imposter syndrome

Is everything about me new, has everything old in me passed away?

If you are asking that question too – lets ask the Holy Spirit to speak to us

Let's pray ...

Is everything about me new, has everything old in me passed away?

The answer is Yes... and No!

And the key lies in what it means to be “in Christ” (v16)

It's a term Paul uses again and again

Over various epistles he explores the breadth and depth of what it means

But the basic truth doesn't change

Its about what happens when we step into the invitation from Jesus to “come, follow me”

Not follow Him just as an example of how to live well

But follow Him into a living relationship

And that following is about saying a simple Yes: Yes please to what He offers to us and has achieved for us in his cross and resurrection: forgiveness and the deepening knowledge and experience that we are children of God the Father

This short phrase “In Christ” is something we explore for a lifetime

It is so real and fundamental that Paul uses the term “being a new creation” and Jesus talks about “being born again”

At which point Imposter syndrome pops up!

... from our side

But from God's side this really is how things are: so if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

Not because He ignores the reality of the old

No, it is true because of two things:

Firstly, the reality of what has happened in the past: the victory of Christ's cross and resurrection that first Good Friday and Easter day

That was a fundamental resetting of the compass for the whole created order, including you and me

But secondly it is true because when God promises to do something in the future it is as good as done – and so we can talk about it as a present, even as past reality!

“There is a new creation”

And that's you and me ...

... even though the fulfilment of all we now can be is something that lies in the future as God the Holy Spirit works on re-storying and restoring us day by day and over a life-time

- Re-storying is about Whose I am, my internal direction, the More of knowing myself more and more as a child of God loved not for what I do but simply for whose I am
- Restoring is Who I am, my values, ingrained responses, and lifestyle now not centred on myself, but on God

In our gospel Jesus talks in parables about the same thing, what He calls the Kingdom

Jesus also said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it?” (Mk 4:30)

There is something unstoppable about natural growth, especially the dynamic mustard seed that seems such an imposter! So small but actually full of the potential to become huge

That same power is at work in us as the seed of faith is planted by God within us – the new creation, full of the potential for the old to fall away the new to come

And being “in Christ” isn't just a theory, a new status in God's eyes

It's a relationship

I am in a marriage

It came about through being in love

I carry the awareness of that no longer being just one, but a couple consciously and unconsciously wherever I go and whatever I am doing

The same is true of other relationships – brothers and sisters, child and parent, friend or lover

This being “in” any of these relationship shapes choices, identity and self-worth, direction, responsibility

And at its most basic so too does being “in Christ”

As we say Yes to Yes that Jesus first says to us ...

... as we become "in Christ" ...

... and as we have a growing awareness of being in Christ and allowing ourselves to be shaped by that ...

.. well then, the old really does start to go and the new starts to come even from our side too

In other words, the grounds for imposter syndrome diminish

Not because we become better people and so more acceptable to God

No, but because we are rooted more and more deeply in God's unconditional love for us: Whose we are

That then frees and empowers us to be transformed from the inside out by God: Who we are

To be "in Christ" is to believe what God says about us

That's what Paul is getting at in v16 – "regarding no one from a human point of view ..."

There he is talking about Jesus, embracing Him as Lord

But also, not regarding ourselves in that way either

The fundamental centre of gravity in our lives is what has changed – from self to God, including what He says about us ...

.... that in Christ we are new creations: the old has gone, the new has come

This is a really hard thing to be grasped by: we forget

The world around in which we are immersed 24/7 does not help us to remember whose we are and that we are in Christ

Which is why Christians engage in simple practices to help us remember

And one is Sabbath: regular worship here on Sunday – not just the hymns, Bible and sacrament – but the honest hospitality that when we say: how are you doesn't just answer: ????

Instead, we tell stories from our week about God making us new creations – the successes and the failures

And we seek the support and prayers of one-another

All Saints each Sunday is where we are re-storied and restored

And we need one another for that because we support each other in that

When you aren't here, we all suffer, we are all diminished in reminding one another of whose we are, that we are "in Christ"

Of course there are at times other demands, responsibilities, priorities

But can I strongly suggest that the norm should be to be here – for ourselves and for others

So that we celebrate and lean ever deeper into God's More that if anyone is in in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see everything has become new