

*Sermon God Makes All Things New (and that includes you)*  
The Rev. David J. Marshall, All Angels by the Sea, 6.16.24

Happy Father's Day. The theme of Father's Day will be covered in the prayers so I do not intend to preach on it today. However, today's message involves nature as representative of God's Kingdom. My dad was a High School biology teacher. He saw God's Kingdom and nature as intertwined so this is an homage to him and his favorite theology of God and nature. Plus, I'm throwing in a couple of Greek words that I have been working on just so you know it comes from me.

English is a great and wonderful language. We have a lot of words; some say we have the most words compared to the other languages of the world. We like to make up new words, we like to take words from other languages; even Yiddish, and if you know what a schmuck is you'll know that we like to add words to our language. I have a complaint about English, though. We could use a few more words for snow. If you've lived in a snowy climate you know that there are different kinds of snow – heavy, light, corn, powder, thick, etc. We have to put adjectives in front of snow to make the difference. An indigenous language in the Yukon has six different words for snow. We should add some of those to our language. And what about sand. We have one word but many different types of sand. Some say the sand on Longboat is better than on Siesta Key (and vice-versa). The sand here is different than Crystal River and different than San Diego or northern California. But it's the same word. (There's no sand in Washington State, by the way, just rocks that damage propellers and keels; it's probably why I worry about running aground in Sarasota Bay but I don't need to worry because it's sand – fine, white, pretty sand)

Here's my real complaint: we need more words for “new”. Let me give you a sentence as an example. My boat has a new bottom paint so now we moor (park) it at our new dock. The first new – for bottom paint – is because it was new paint, it had never been used on another boat nor had my boat ever had bottom paint before. It's new. The dock is new too. But, we're probably the tenth owner since the late 1970's or early '80's when it was first made. But, it's new to us... yet the dock is not new. That's why we need more than one word for new. Americans like new things. We're fascinated with them. You can say you have a “new car” even if it's used. We have our New to You Art Sale – we don't call it “used art sale” we call it new to you. Yet, there is another definition of new – something that has just been created or made. You know, something new.

Greek has more than one word for new. I bring this up because today's reading from Second Corinthians was originally written in Greek. Paul, the author, writes in Christ we are a new creation; God makes all things new. Is the “new” something that was used but is now new to us? Is it refurbished, renewed, restored? Or, is it new-new. The definition of “new” Paul used is this: something that was not in existence before or something or someone who no longer looks like or resembles what they were before. So it's new-new. Before we go farther down this road, let's take a look at our first lesson from the prophet Ezekiel.

This was most likely written when the Jewish people were in captivity in Babylon. They thought their religion, their language, their ethnicity was over. They were captured and they were never going to leave. God spoke through Ezekiel and said this: I am going to take the top of a cedar tree and plant it in Israel. It will grow and produce fruit.

This has made me think of cedar trees. First, do they produce fruit or was that metaphoric? Cedars do produce fruit which are tiny cones. They are eaten by birds and those birds find rest in the branches of the tree. This sounds like what Jesus was talking about with the mustard seed. But there is more to it. The cedar tree can grow in Israel but it cannot reproduce itself – the seeds don't work in that climate and soil. To grow a cedar in that region, it must be a shoot from another tree that is transplanted there to grow. This is a wonderful metaphor for faith. It does not naturally grow in us, it has to be planted from somewhere else and then it becomes "new" in us.

Paul wrote that old things have passed away, are passing away and will pass away. God is creating The New in us. The old things that are passing away are things that grow in us naturally – anger, division, distrust and resentment. Those things happen naturally. What needs to be planted in us are the shoot of faith – hope, faith, love and charity and forgiveness. Those don't naturally grow in us; not like anger and the rest. But, the good news is that God is creating new things in us. The new in us is something that was not there before. It is a new creation.

Another way to look at this is God does not create anger or bitterness or division. That's not a part of God's creation. But, what God does do is take the top of a growing cedar tree and plant it where it wouldn't normally be. This is an allegory for how love is planted in us by our parents and others who first loved us – starting with God. That love grows and is new. Plus, when we are rooted in love and charity and forgiveness, who we are is different than we were before. We might look like the same person but we are different on the inside and how we act to others on the outside.

Let me finish with a question: what has been planted in you? Where is God growing in you? Is God calling you to transplant some love, peace, faith and hope that you have and plant it somewhere new? I have faith and hope that new things are being planted in our church and our island community; in our state, in our nation and in our world. God is creating something new. It grows in our hearts and in our communities.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.