

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

From now on, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

All the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to Jesus. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."

So Jesus told them this parable:

"There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands."' So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe--the best one--and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

"Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was

going on. He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.' Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!' Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.'"

To be InChrist, is to understand our identity. To be InChrist, is to have been reconciled. It describes an existential resolve of eternal worth.

We are called to be reconciled to this humbling truth, and to be a vessel of reconciliation for others. It is in God's divine nature to reconcile all things to God's self and ours to participate in God's divine nature.

It is a pretty big job. It should not be taken lightly. There are organizations whose primary mission is reconciliation such as, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission created at the end of apartheid. Why? Because conflicts arise when we forget our identity.

The TRC, is quoted in the book, Country of My Skull by Antjie Krog on the essential part of reconciliation as identity, "... the first casualty of conflict is identity, and that redefining identity is a fundamental step toward reconciliation... a group that neglects this essential stage is likely to become frozen and in a permanent quest for identity..."

Imagine a married couple hits a rough time in their relationship and the conflict causes them to consider divorce. No matter how far apart, they remain legally married unless a divorce decree is given by the authorities that joined them in lawful marriage.

We could say they are philosophically divorced already, but that will not hold up in court. They would have to have their marriage dissolved due to disillusionment. It's as if the law must determine their marriage was just an illusion.

If, however, they never divorce and choose to reconcile, they do not have to go through the legal and ceremonial necessities to marry again. They always were married. They may just want to have a party and celebrate what always was. They were living as unmarried. They were living the illusion of divorce until reconciled.

Perhaps this is the meaning Paul uses when he says, those who are *InChrist* have been reconciled. Reconciled to what? Reconciled to the truth of their identity as God's own.

To live in the illusion of separation is to serve myself, others and or our property as gods. These are finite gods.

This identity of our making relies solely on self-ambition and acquisition. An identity InChrist has unlimited resources and access.

Jesus illustrates this in the story of the prodigal son. The story is actually is about two prodigal sons. Two sons whose identity is tattooed in the DNA of their Father's lineage. A tattoo that can never be removed.

In the time this story was written, it was said that the eldest son in a family shall receive two thirds of their father's estate when the father dies. The younger son would receive one third.

The younger son wanted his portion now rather than wait until his father died.

The son takes off and tries to double his cash on his FanDuel account. After losing all his money he gets a job worthy of a segment on the "Dirtiest Jobs" reality show. Eventually, the younger son sees the grass much greener back home with the father.

At home he lived high on the hog, now as a pig slopper they lived off of him. In his misery he becomes resentful of his Fathers hired hands who are better off.

Unsure of his status with the father, he rehearses his words of contrition. Perhaps the more humble he might sound, the better chance he will have.

To his surprise he is received with open arms even before he can give his speech. A party is thrown for his return but it causes resentment in the oldest son. The oldest bitterly protests to his father.

Evidently both sons were living an illusion. The youngest thought he would be free out on his own and the oldest thought he had earned his freedom by how compliant he was.

Neither understood they possessed an irrevocable identity in their DNA as sons of the father. They believed they were nothing if they weren't living according to their own power. In reality, they could choose where they wanted to live out this life of freedom. Apart from the father's residence or In the father's residence. Outside the residence they would have limited benefits. In the father everything the father has is accessible to them.

Both were living the illusion that their identity and freedom were wrapped up in their actions of self-determination. The father is inviting them back into the home of the truth of their existence. It is clear neither son understood how their father viewed their relationship.

I say it a lot and I will say it again. In the father's eyes they belonged. It is the same bond we have with our heavenly parent.

How awesome it is when we awaken from our identity slumber. Our on-going contemplative practices are for this very purpose. Instantly, in our grounded place, we return to being InChrist. We are rescued from our self-determination to earn or resist God's pleasure.

Therefore, reconciliation cannot mean a literal new birth or literal spiritual birth for we are not separate from God. It is an awakening. We are returning to the home we abandoned by chasing other gods. It is in this venture that we discover our own created kingdom is much smaller and inadequate. In body, soul, and spirit poverty strikes the prodigal in us all.

There are two prodigal sons in this story. The oldest son and the younger son. Both are telling the stories that George Orwell feared in the book 1984 and Aldous Huxley feared in a Brave New World. A Goodreads explanation summarizes "Orwell feared that what we fear, will ruin us. Huxley feared that what we desire, will ruin us." Both appear to be true.

Both lived in the illusion that they're identity was rooted in individuality. It turns out neither were truly living in the home of their father, but in the home of their own making.

As the father explained to the resentful eldest son, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours."

When we are In Christ, we live out our identity.

An identity isn't earned or self-created. It is declared by something greater than ourselves. When we give ourselves to the truth of our identity it's as though all things become new. It is a coming home to the heart of Christ which takes residence in every breath and beat of our hearts.

A parent may long for their estranged adult child to come home. Ultimate reality says the child never stops being their child. They just might not be experiencing the benefits that come with being the child.

"Bless the Lord oh my soul and forget not all His benefits" -Psalm 103:2