**3 Pentecost, June 14, 2015, 1 Samuel 15:34-16:13; Ps 20, 2 Cor 5:6-17; Mark 4:26-34:**

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Today, our Scripture readings challenge us to live in the Kingdom of God as new **creations** in Christ. The word "creation" makes us think about the beginning of the world, about when God created us and everything around us - and how we see creation. Recently, I had the opportunity to go camping in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. While at a gift shop in one of the State Parks up there, I came upon a magnet with the " Yooper Creation Story" on it. Here it is: "**In the beginning dere was nuttin. On da first day God created da Upper Peninsula. On da second day, he created da partidge, da deer, da bear, da fish, and da ducks. On da third day he said, "Let dere be Yoopers to roam in da. U.P." On da fouth day, he created da udder world below. On da fifth day he said "Let dere be trolls to live in da world down below." On da sixth day he created da bridge so da trolls would have a way to get to heaven. God said it was good....and on da seventh day He went huntin**." That is an interesting perspective on creation, isn't it?: a fun "up nort" kind of way of seeing things. How do you see things? We have a tendency to get stuck in a rut in how we see our lives, how we see others, and the world around us -- and this way of seeing things is often self-centered.

I have been reminded a lot of this lately, as I interact with my 3 year old grandson (who arrives this afternoon from Colorado). The way he observes life is fresh and new, with great focus and curiosity about ordinary things that I can take for granted. He has caused me to wake up and notice everyday things (like ferns and apples and hot running water and pots and pans and trucks) with a sense of wonder instead of seeing them as static wallpaper. Seeing things through his little eyes has caused me to experience creation in a whole new way, with new eyes.

Today, we are experiencing church in a different way too. Many people associate the "church" with sitting for a long time trying to stay awake in an uncomfortable pew inside a stuffy old building. That's not what church is, and because of our change of context (being outside) we are reminded of that today. Here now, we are church, sitting out in God's creation listening to the birds and actively enjoying each other as we worship. Church is all of us gathered in prayer, reading the bible, and receiving the Sacrament for a purpose: to be built up to live our lives fully according to God's purpose and plan for us.

Paul, on our 2nd Corinthians Epistle, helps us with this way of living out our purpose. He says that we are to live confidently, "***at home with the Lord....with the love of Christ urging us on."*** As we go through our lives, seeing things, we function from the inside out. How we act and feel on the outside is a reflection of what is going on inside of us. We have a choice of who to focus on inside: ourselves or God. The question that each of us faces today is: what do we chose? When we live from the inside out ***at home with the Lord,*** being aware every minute as we face daily challenges that ***Christ is urging us on*** our lives change***. Paul put it this way, "...if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new***." When we are living from a place inside of being "***in Christ***" we are removed from being wrapped around our own self and the muck of life, and taken to the supernatural wonder of God and God's ways. This is called the Kingdom of God; the Kingdom of God is the amazing wonder of God

In our Gospel reading today, Jesus teaches in parables about the Kingdom of God. We listen to this and tend to think of God's Kingdom as a place, a place where we are not. But, Jesus effectively is saying, "**just wait a minute....heads up....you can be there! It's right here! Make a choice to be at home with me."** We are in a world which drives people to function from a place of "the Kingdom of me," instead of the Kingdom of God -- and this provides us an unfulfilled, frustrating life full of longing for more. The Kingdom of God is a state of being, a state of living all the time making the choice to live drenched with God's free gift of grace; to live "***in Christ***." In the Kingdom of God, we put aside our egotistical need to control others and this is replaced with patience and understanding. In the Kingdom of God, violence is replaced by dialogue and forgiveness. When we live this way, we grow and flourish (like the mustard plant).

How do you see yourself, others, all of creation? Today, take a fresh look and live into the life being a "***new creation in Chris***t." The love of Christ urges us on every minute of every day, if we allow God inside.

As we function from the inside out, at home in Christ, we can't help but share God's love with others. All of us have an opportunity to share this love, no matter what our circumstances. When we face this challenge, many of us think we don't have the opportunity or have the gifts to share God's love or our faith effectively. All of us have an opportunity to share this love, no matter what our circumstances. Here is an example to inspire you: We have a parishioner who functions so effectively from a place of being "in Christ" everyday, in spite of her circumstance of impaired health. She can't drive, she can't walk much, she no longer gets out of the building in which she lives much. And yet, every person she interacts with throughout her day experiences Christ's love through her -- I have seen this over and over again when I visit with her. Watching her interact with others, I have seen her patience, her keen ability to listen, her sharing of her wisdom in a sensitive way, her kind manner, her genuine caring. We have an opportunity to share this Good News too. We can do this, from the inside out, "***at home with the Lord***"--with ***Jesus urging us on***!

To help us all do this, we have little cards with a wonderful message from St. John's to carry around and give to people. The cards are little tools to help us; they are about the Kingdom of God growing and expanding here, through us. Every hour of every day we have the choice of whether to live in the kingdom of God as a "***new creation***," share the Kingdom of God or not. Make the choice to be "***at home with the Lord***...***the love of Christ urges you on."*** Amen.