

THE MESSAGE for Oct 3, 2010
The Rev. Dr. R. K. Miller
2 Corinthians 5:16-21
Kingdom Agenda

Hopes and dreams. We live by our hopes and dreams. We all have hopes and dreams for our lives, for the people around us, and for the world we live in. Our hopes and dreams shape how we live our lives.

Two months ago our dishwasher started acting funny. After pushing the start button the washing light and the drying light both came on at the same time. Then it would start and stop and the lights on the panel would flash on and off. One day it just quit working altogether. So we called the repair man with hopes and dreams that he could fix it and get us back in business ASAP.

The repair man arrived. We saw him as our savior to fix our dishwasher. We explained the situation. He asked a few questions for clarification and then said, "Let's take a look." He took the front panel off the dishwasher and began to run a few tests. He led me to believe that the control board on the inside needed to be replaced. After a phone call or two, he said he could have the part in a week and come back and put it in then.

His services for that 15 minute house-call cost us \$52.58. The part and his labor for his next visit would be an additional \$200 or so. I had other hopes and dreams regarding our dishwasher.

I got this bright idea that I could get the replacement part and fix it myself – saving at least \$100.00 or so. I'm a handy guy – I thought. I can do this. So Amber went on line and ordered the replacement part. The UPS Truck arrived a few days later. The replacement part had arrived. I had hopes and dreams of no more washing dishes by hand.

I could hardly wait to remove the old part and put the new one in. I was done in less than 10 minutes. I was pretty proud of myself. I had hopes and dreams of hearing the dishwashing swooshing, and spinning, and cleaning our dishes once again. I pushed the start button and nothing happened – no lights, no swooshing, or spinning, no cleaning of dishes. It was doing the exact same thing as before.

Amber went online and did some research and found out that the front touch panel that controls everything on this model dishwasher wears out rather quickly – only lasting one to three years. It's a defective control panel. And it's currently out of stock. They can't keep it on the shelf. I guess we will be washing dishes by hand for the next couple of weeks. Until we get a new control panel or a new dishwasher.

Hopes and dreams. Sometimes our hopes and dreams become a reality and they take us to new and exciting places in our life's journey. At other times our hopes are

dashed, our dreams turn into nightmares and we need to make some adjustments in our life's journey. Many of you have shared with me such stories of hopes and dreams that have worked out even better than you had thought. And many of you have shared with me your hopes and dreams that went awry.

Consider this: God has hopes and dreams for our lives, for the people around us, and for the world we live in. God's hopes and dreams involve a kingdom agenda. When we are plugged into God's hopes and dreams, plugged into God's kingdom agenda it becomes the control panel for our lives, like the control panel on a dishwasher.

God's kingdom agenda never wears out and never needs replaced.

As a pastor I have hopes and dreams that we will live into the kingdom agenda God has for our lives here at Friedens – *to grow in faith as followers of Jesus and who lead others into this lifestyle of faithfulness as well.*

The hopes and dreams God has for us are revealed in our reading today from 2 Corinthians 5:16-21.

Saint Paul writes:

¹⁶So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. ¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! ¹⁸All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. ²¹God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

According to Paul God's hopes and dreams for our lives involve at least four things:

First: God has hopes and dreams about how we view each other and how we treat each other.

Look around the room, what do you see? We see people, right? When we see people we see the good, the bad, and the ugly and we often can't see any further. What if instead, we saw objects -- not people -- but objects of God's love? You and I are the objects of God's love.

Saint Paul tells us that as disciples of Jesus we see ourselves and everyone around us differently. God's love is at work in our lives helping us to see differently. We see not people – we see God's work in progress all around us.

Story, "The Bishop's Gift"

A church had fallen upon hard times. Only 8 members were left: the pastor and seven others, all over the age of 60.

Nearby lived a retired Bishop, so the pastor decided to go ask the Bishop if he could offer any advice that might help them save the church. The pastor and the Bishop spoke at length, but when asked for advice, the Bishop simply responded by saying, "I have no advice to give. The only thing I can tell you is that the Messiah is one of you."

The pastor, returned to the church, told the church members what the Bishop had said. In the months that followed, the old church members pondered the words of the Bishop. "The Messiah is one of us?" they each asked themselves. As they thought about this possibility, they all began to treat each other with extraordinary respect and care and trust just in case one of them was the Messiah.

As time went by, people visiting the church noticed the respect and the gentleness and the kindness that existed in that church. Hardly knowing why, more and more people began to come back to the church. They began to bring their friends, and their friends brought more friends. Within a few years, that church became a thriving church once again, thanks to the Bishop's gift.

God has hopes and dreams about how we view each other, which leads to how we treat each other.

Second: Paul tells us that God has hopes and dreams of making all things new. Our theological term is - reconciliation.

Paul writes, "If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" Look around, God is making all things new - you and me and everything in this place is being made new – reconciled. That's good thing. That's a God thing.

Reconciliation means *to literally meet again and reestablish a normal relationship between belligerents*. I like that definition. We can all be belligerents at times. We're human. We need our relationships reconciled from time to time.

The image that comes to mind for me when I think of the word reconcile is a Checkbook. We reconcile our checkbooks to match what the bank statement says to put them in a right relationship.

That's what Jesus does for us and our relationship with God. Jesus took all of our sins – past, present, and future and nailed them on the cross and left them there to die so that nothing will prevent God's love from flowing into our lives. Jesus has reconciled us with God.

Third: Paul says that God has hopes and dreams that we will share in this ministry of reconciliation. God is counting on us to do so.

This past week during our final First Communion Class, I talked about how in the bread and the wine of communion we received God's forgiveness so that we can forgive each other and have our relationships restored. One of the students just looked at me in deep thought then smiled, and said, "Cool." I responded, "Yeah! It is cool!"

Forgiveness -- giving it or receiving it really is cool.

Fourth and finally: Paul says that God has hopes and dreams that you and I will be ambassadors for Christ.

An ambassador is someone who represents a foreign nation, a foreign country, or a foreign kingdom in order to strength relationships between the two. When it comes to our relationship with Jesus and his kingdom that's exactly what we are. We are ambassadors for Christ Jesus. We represent him and his kingdom on earth.

When we see an ambassador we see in that person the nation, the country, the kingdom they come from. So too it is with us as disciples of Jesus. May people see Jesus when they see us. May they see in us things like: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, and self-control in order to strength our relationship with God and one another

God has hopes and dreams for our lives, for the people around us, and for the world in which we live in. God's hopes and dreams, God's kingdom agenda is the only control panel for our lives. My hope, my dream is that God's love will be the control panel in our lives making all things new, and clean, and reconciled.

Question: Since we are the object of God's love – now what? Amen.