

**OLD TESTAMENT LESSON**      Jeremiah 31:31-34      page  
(The Messiah will bring a new beginning.)

**31 "The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.** 32 It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD.

33 "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. 34 No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

**THE HYMN OF REFLECTION**      **"With the Lord Begin Your Task"**      **444 v. 2**

**THE EPISTLE**      2 Corinthians 5:14-21      page  
(New Beginnings in Jesus)

14 For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. 15 And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. 16 So 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.

**17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!** 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that 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.

20 We 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. 21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

**THE HYMN OF REFLECTION**      **"With the Lord Begin Your Task"**      **444 v. 3, 4**

**THE GOSPEL**      Luke 19:1-10      page  
(A New Day for the House of Zacchaeus)

1 Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. 2 A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. 3 He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. 5 When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today."

6 So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. 7 All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a 'sinner.'" 8 But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the

poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."

9 Jesus said to him, "**Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham.** 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." (NIV)

INTRO - A parable is told of a king who was spoiled by power and wealth, and grew somewhat bored with life. He decided he wanted to see something new, something no one had ever seen before. Throughout his kingdom, however, no one could come up with something so new that it had not been seen. One farmer having heard the request of the king, and that a reward was offered told the king he could give what he desired. The king was wary. 'What could a common farmer show him he had not seen. But, he allowed the farmer to make his presentation. The farmer brought forth a medium sized wood box . Not only the king, but all his associates were straining to see what no one had ever seen before. What was in the box? The farmer opened the box and there was straw sticking out. He picked up a small bunch of the straw. In the straw were a couple of eggs, one of which seemed to be moving. A beak picked. The shell pushed out. As a chick came forth from the egg, the farmer said to the king. 'You majesty, no one has ever seen this chick before. You have seen something new.' The king realized what the farmer said was true.

I. There is a fascination with what is new and, especially in our age, a boredom with the old.

A. No wonder people get so excited over a new year.

1. Let's get rid of the tired old things of the past year, with it's problems and failures.
2. Let's begin a new year, with new opportunities, and new excitement.
3. But, guess what, in December of next year, 2008 will seem old, not new like it does now.

B. Did you see the repetition in Bible verses on the theme of new life?

1. In Jeremiah God promises, **31 "The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make A NEW COVENANT with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.**
2. In 2 Corinthians we are told by the Apostle Paul, **17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is A NEW CREATION; the old has gone, the new has come!**
3. But, where I really want you to look is the story of Zacchaeus. This tax collector, having been visited by Jesus declared that he would give away his wealth to care for others and serve God. Jesus then proclaimed, **"Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham.**
4. Jesus is declaring that salvation, and new life, were now a new reality for Zacchaeus, where they had not been present before.

II. Did you ever buy a new car? I have a couple of times. It stays smelling new, and looking new for a while. But, then the first ding happens, or an accident, or just dirt. And, maybe you take it fishing and it starts to smell (Maybe YOU don't do that. I bought my truck new 9 years

ago, but my family complained the other day it smells like fish eggs.)

A. Why do things get old and smelly?

1. Well, that is what has happened to the world since sin.
2. Our world is in decay. Have you ever seen a spawned out salmon? A pink salmon? They are ugly, compared to the beauty of the fish when young.
3. We know the results of old age in our bodies as we grow older.

B. But, just like a car, where some of the problems happen with wear and tear, but others happen when we make a mistake, when we have an accident, when we hit a tree, or another car, much of the decay, many of the problems in our lives are caused by ourselves.

1. When we confess our sins on Sunday we often say the phrase, 'We are in bondage to sin.'
2. Our sins, our mistakes, our rebellions and acts of selfishness rather than love and worship, these acts cause problems that make our lives seem old.

III. Let's go back to Zacchaeus. Was his life really new after that day?

A. I personally believe, based on the Bible verse and this account, that Zacchaeus' life was never the same again.

1. I want you to know it wasn't Zacchaeus actions that caused the newness.
2. Zacchaeus actions of sacrifice, and love, and worship followed the unexpected love of Jesus. If there was anyone Zacchaeus did not expect Jesus to follow home, it was himself.
3. The love of Jesus for Zacchaeus, the acceptance, the forgiveness, made Zacchaeus realize that Jesus even cared for an old sinner like him.
4. Jesus love changed Zacchaeus' heart so that this man who had probably formerly stolen and embezzled, now was acting in new ways of generosity and love.

B. When you know that you have dented your life with mistakes and sin, but that God, knowing you sent Jesus for you, that changes YOUR life too.

1. You have a future, because you now have eternity in heaven.
2. You have a purpose, because you want to use your lives as Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:15, to 'live for the one who died and rose for you.'
3. You have a new start every day, because Jesus' forgiveness is there.

C. For Zacchaeus, Jesus could say, **TODAY salvation has come to this house**, because Zacchaeus life was changed.

1. Today, your life is new, as you confessed your sins tonight and received forgiveness.
2. Today, your life is new, as you come in repentance and receive the forgiveness of God in the Lord's Supper.
3. That's what Jesus does, he makes your life new.

CONCLUSION - Please consider with me for a moment the celebrations that will happen tonight. These are not totally bad or wrong, you know. In the Old Testament God's people celebrated a holiday God commanded called 'Yom Kippur', or Day of Atonement. This was a New Year and new life celebration. But, even if we don't have the fireworks, or the libations, or

the parties that will happen tonight, think of how much better new life is in Jesus. This world celebrates new year once every 365 days. You and I can celebrate new life every day in Jesus. In this world, when a new year comes, the same debts, the same past is still there. In the sight of our creator, when He makes us new, the old has gone, the new has come.' May your new calendar year, be blessed with new life in Jesus every day in 2008, and beyond. Amen.