

081317

Created! Sermon Series

Created and Re-Created

2 Corinthians 5:17

Pastor Wayne Puls, Senior Pastor at Hope Lutheran Church

Over the past three weeks, Pastor Lew, Pastor Wagner, and I have been preaching a one-word sermon series. Actually, we've hit you with thousands of words in our sermons. Because we always like to give you your money's worth when you come to this church. We never want you to feel short-changed when it comes to sermon length.

But every single one of those thousands of words we've used in the past three sermons have revolved and centered around just one word. One humongous word. One dynamic, momentous, enigmatic word: **created!** We've preached about how our omnipotent God **created** the whole universe out of nothing, how our eternal God **created** humans in his own image, and how we live today in a created-but-cursed world. These **Created** sermons have come from the first three pages of the Bible, Genesis chapters 1, 2, and 3.

Many people today, I'm sure you know, regard these three pages as nothing more than myth. Hundreds of human cultures all over the world have their own creation myths. So many non-believers, and many people of faith alike, assume that these three pages are not literal, not true, but merely ancient tales attempting to explain our human origins. Modern science, they say, tells the real story.

Now, I will freely admit that these three pages do not answer all of our questions about creation, about the world's origins, about the big bang theory or the theory of evolution. These three pages do not purport to be a science textbook. But don't be too quick to disregard these three pages, either.

Because the central truth they proclaim – that God is creator – is echoed throughout the rest of these pages 101 times. The whole Bible makes it abundantly, repeatedly clear that God **created** all things. So that one-word sermon series title is incredibly important. Our teaching that God **created** the world and us is a central doctrine of the Christian faith.

And here's the part I've been itching to get to for the past three weeks. When we use that word **created** in church, we're not just talking about when God said, eons ago, "Let there be light." We're not just talking about God continuing to preserve and govern his **created** world. We're not even just talking about how, on a very personal level, God **created** you and me.

The Bible teaches us today that our creating God is also a re-creating God. We are not only **created** by God, but **re-created** by him. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation."

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. This doctrine of re-creation is also central to our Christian faith. This teaching speaks to what God's doing in your life right now, and what he's going to make happen tomorrow, and the next day, and the next. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation."

And this isn't the only Bible verse that speaks of being **re-created**. The New Testament is full of re-creation language. Romans 6:4, "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in **newness of life**." John 3:3, "Unless one is **born again**," Jesus says, "he cannot see the kingdom of God." Many other Scriptures proclaim the reality of re-generation, new birth, new hearts, new spirits ... of being **re-created**.

But this one tells how it happens. “If anyone is *in Christ*, he is a new creation.” What does it mean for us to be “in Christ?”

Imagine a sphere, a 3-d circle. Christ fills that sphere as Lord. Christ fills that sphere as Savior, Ruler, Messiah, Redeemer, Lamb of God, King of Kings. That sphere is filled with Christ’s love, Christ’s goodness, Christ’s glory, Christ’s humility, Christ’s power. That’s a pretty cool sphere, isn’t it?

How’d you like to be in that sphere? My sphere’s pretty different. So is yours, right? We said it before. We’re just poor, miserable sinners. We’ve got all kinds of sins and iniquities in our spheres. We offend God in our spheres. We deserve his temporal and eternal punishment in our spheres. How can we get into Christ’s sphere?

Only by God’s means of grace. God’s grace reaches our lives, our hearts, our spirits by the objective means of his Word and his Sacraments. God brings about faith in us by the Word and the Sacraments. And it’s that faith – God-sparked, God-given faith – that connects us to Christ, that unites us to Christ, that places you and me into Christ’s beautiful, blessed sphere.

“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.” Nothing less! A new creation! This is no mere mending, or a potential improvement. This isn’t like going to the gym and hitting the greenway, and trying to get yourself in slightly better shape. This is an actual new “creation.” This word, “creation,” leads us to think of what God did when he *created* the world. And these two acts, “creating” and “re-creating” are comparable.

If you are in Christ, God takes a sinner like you, gets rid of the old, and creates something new. Someone new. Someone forgiven -- because of Christ. Someone righteous -

- because of Christ. Someone saved -- because of Christ. Someone on her way to God's perfect paradise in heaven -- all because of Christ. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation."

If only we would think of ourselves in this way. So often we get down on ourselves, or we think our lives lack value and purpose. Think again! You are God's **created** and **re-created** child! You don't have to wallow in your same old bad habits, and give in without a fight to every temptation that comes your way this day. You're a person God has **created** and **re-created** through faith in Jesus! You don't have to follow the crowd. You don't need to live to please others. You have only to please the omnipotent God who **created** you and the gracious God who is day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute, patiently and lovingly re-creating you.

If only each one of us would stop and think of ourselves the way that God does. We are in Christ. We are in his sphere. We are **created** and **re-created**.

May God's mighty power and his gracious love help us to think and live that way, every day.