

2 Kings 5:1-14
Psalm 30

Galatians 6: (1-6) 7-16
Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

Have you ever looked in a mirror, stood there for a while, and felt disappointed in the way you look? You may wish for a new look, to be a new creation. You may have seen the ABC TV show *Extreme Makeover*. The show depicted men and women undergoing extreme makeovers involving plastic surgery, exercise regimens, hairdressing, and wardrobing. Their loved ones were not allowed to see the incremental changes during the participant's absence. Each episode ended with the participants return to their families and friends, showing the reactions of the loved ones. Many could not believe how wonderful were these extreme makeovers, this "new creation."

Other times we may look in the mirror and think, "Dude, I am a mess." I mean that in terms of our actions, of how we disappoint ourselves by our actions or lack of action. We do not understand our own actions, why we do those things we should not do or do not do those things we should do. If we are truly honest with ourselves, I am sure there are those days in which we think, "Dude, I am a mess." We all experience the inability to live up to our own ideals. We all cobble together a law of our own lives from our understanding of Christian virtues, family values, or any other definitions of a good person. We know that we should not lie, and yet we do when the boss asks us why we did not get something done or when a friend asks if we had made a derogatory remark about them behind their back. We know we should not gossip or tell tales, and yet when we enter into conversations, we quickly go to the juicy parts. We know we should help others and yet we are so self-centered we look out for ourselves with no regard for the common good. Paul, here in his letter to the church in Galatia, warns us that we are to get away from me—centered living, from all the works of the flesh, including envy,

backbiting and competitiveness. Elsewhere, in his letter to the Romans, Paul wrote “I do not understand my own actions. I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ...For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do.” We know what we should be doing, and yet we keep doing the wrong. We too may have our days in which we are angry with ourselves and wonder why we do what we do. We may wish we could do a makeover with how we live our lives, a new me that acts in accordance to our own expectations. We look in the mirror, we look at ourselves, and think, “Dude, what a mess!” We would all like to look in the mirror and say, “Wow! What a hunk!” Or, “Wow! What a beauty?”

That is the way God sees us. No, I do not mean a hunk or a beauty queen, but when God sees us, God does not see our mess. We may think that our lives are a mess, and maybe they are, but God sees through the mess. In last Tuesdays Lincoln Journal Star there was an article about former Husker football players who came back for an alumni camping experience. They enjoyed getting back together like a reunion, but the reunion was not just for them to get to see each other again. These football players came to Lincoln to lead a camp for about 150 campers. These kids were excited to participate in a camp led by these notable football players. One of these players Will Compton, is now a linebacker in the NFL with Washington. He had signed with Washington as an undrafted free agent in 2013, and became a central figure for the NFC East champions last season, posting 94 tackles and working his way into a starting role at middle linebacker when the play offs rolled around. He felt that the key to his success was staying the course and believing in himself, even when things weren't always going his way. He succeeded. Likewise, when we feel like things are not going

our way, that we are making a mess of our lives, God believes in us. When we feel like we are making a mess, God continues to believe in us even when we don't believe in ourselves. God does and will clean the mess we may make of our lives. God's mercy and grace makes it possible. Mercy is not receiving the punishment we deserve, not receiving what we deserve. Grace is receiving what we do not deserve, God's love for us.

Not only does God's grace overcome the messes we make, God's grace motivates us to stay out of a mess, motivates us to live as we should. Because we have received God's grace, we are a new creation. Notice that Paul says that "a new creation is everything!" What really matters is that we are a new creation. That does not mean we are perfect. But in God's eyes we are not a mess; rather a new creation.

It is God's grace that motivates us to be a new creation. In the 1998 movie *Les Miserables*, not the 2012 musical, the main character is Jean Valjean, a Frenchman who had been imprisoned for twenty years for stealing bread for his starving family. In this scene he encounters a bishop who is kind to him. (Show video) Because of this bishop's grace, Valjean escapes from the police. And he becomes a new creation. Valjean becomes a successful business man and mayor of a small town. This is what God's mercy, God's grace looks like. And God's grace and mercy makes possible our being a new creation.

How majestic is the name of the Lord our God. Amen!