

# Christ the Transformer of Culture | 2 Corinthians

## 5:17-20

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[0:00] Welcome to Ontario Community Church, where we're dedicated to encouraging, equipping, and engaging lives for Christ. Located in Ontario, Oregon, Pastor Patrick Daly preaches insightful sermons from the Word of God, offering practical applications for modern living.

We're delighted to share this sermon with you. All right. Well, good morning, everyone. How are we doing this morning? We're doing good. I know we're awake from that loud sound that we had today. So if you were a little sleepy, sometimes we keep you on your toes here. Well, it's definitely great to be here with all of you. Last week, we had our annual Bazaar, and that was just a wonderful time for us to fellowship, get to know others within the community, and just have a wonderful meal.

I know there was so much food and just so much fun together. This last, the week before that, we finished up our series through the book of Ezra.

And so today, we are doing a message titled, Christ the Transformer of Culture. And this is a standalone sermon. This, in the next few weeks, will be going over the parables, the teachings of Christ.

[1:11] But today, I felt it was very important for us to go over how not only does Christ transform our lives, but he is the Transformer of our culture.

It's so important for us to remember how, just as we took communion and we take time to examine our hearts and to reflect on the love that God has for us, we are to be reminded that God gives us the opportunity every single day to believe in him, to grow in him, and to do good in his name.

And I think that as times such as this, there's a lot of change, a lot of challenges that are happening in our culture, in our very lives, and even in this country.

And certainly, as we've gone over the book of Ezra previously, I want us to be reminded that we, as the people of God, we need to pray for divine intervention, that the Spirit of God, that the Holy Spirit will work in our lives, but also in our friends, our families, our leaders within the community, and let's face it, we just had an election that happened.

Some of us are happy, some of us are unhappy with the results, and I'm not going there. But where I am going is saying, we've gotta pray that God will work in and through our leaders, much as God has worked in and through our lives.

[2:43] And so turn with me in your Bibles, in your ESV Bible, page 1148, we're gonna go into 2 Corinthians, chapter five, verses 17 through 20.

Some of you may know this very famous verse that talks about the ministry of reconciliation, or being an ambassador for Christ, or some of us may simply know this verse as being a new creation. And so are we all there? You're welcome to use your ESV Bible. Once again, it's page 1148. The verse is 2 Corinthians, chapter five, verses 17 through 20.

And let's read this together. Let's start from verse 17 and we'll go all the way, we can go all the way to the end, that's fine. Let's read it together. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

The old has passed away, behold, the new has come. And this is from God who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

[4:03] That is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trust passes against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

For our sake, he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. Very powerful verses that we see here.

It goes to show how important it is for us to first off become a believer in Christ. And upon believing in Christ, we are saved by grace through faith, and there is transformation that happens much as I have mentioned before and I'll mention again, being transported from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of light, how we are like vessels.

We are to be filled with the Holy Spirit we are to be filled with the love and grace that comes from God, and we're transported, becoming a new creation.

[5:11] And I want to ask all of you a question here. What does it look like for us as the body of Christ to be a part of God's work in transforming our world?

What does that look like? I want you to think of that question and how important it is for us to think that us as Christians, we are called to share in the hope of Jesus Christ, the gospel message, we are to share in our testimony, and we are to partake in the ministry of reconciliation being ambassadors for Christ in our everyday dealings with our friends, our families, our coworkers, other students.

We have so much that we have to think about here. And so Christ calls us for a mission. Some of us, you don't have to raise your hand, we may know the great commandment, right?

It is to love God and to love others, right? And there's others, there's the other one known as the Great Commission, which is to go out and to make disciples, right?

And there's baptizing in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit. But what we see here is there's kind of another thing for us to factor in and that is the ministry of reconciliation.

[6:33] It is important for us to keep in mind how we, Christ reconciles us and gives us purpose. God has a much greater plan for our lives and when we believe in Christ and we are saved, we are to be ambassadors for Christ in our everyday.

So the question that comes up is we have the breakdown of the verses, right? We have 2 Corinthians 5 verse 17, it begins, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come.

That goes to show that anyone, right, doesn't matter who you are, what you have gone through, what you are going through, that there is an invitation for you to become a Christian, that we must believe in the death burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

If anyone, right, just like how for God, so love the world that he gave his only son that whosoever or whoever, depending on your translation, it's a reminder for us that you, whoever you are, there is hope for your life.

There is hope for all of us in Jesus Christ. And we experience that transformation of through salvation that we are set free from sin. We are set apart and we're called to live as new creations.

[7:57] There's a famous book that I read many years ago. The name of the book was called Christ and Culture. And for those of you who love really deep Christian books, it's by H. Richard Niebuhr.

And he wrote about five different approaches that Christianity or the church, the attitude that they have towards culture, meaning everyday people.

And I'm not going to go too much into the book, I'm just giving you the gist of it. There's some people out there that believe that as Christians we should hide ourselves away from the world. And while it is true there is spiritual warfare, there is a war that is happening between good and evil, the battle is already won in Jesus Christ.

And there is nothing for us to be afraid of. So instead of some that say we should hide away, we should take to heart the fact that we are saved by grace.

And we should have confidence in knowing that, having confidence in our Lord and our God.

There's other people that believe that to be a Christian is to be a sinner, and I know that's going to sound really wild, but it is to continue to sin and to be what we would call a worldly Christian.

[9:16] And although it's true that there is culture that exists and we should go out into culture, we don't become sinners or we are sinners, we don't habitually sin.

Does that make sense? Instead, because we are transformed by Christ and we are a work in progress, yes, we go out into the culture, but we are set apart, we are being that ambassador, exhibiting the light, love and truth of Christ to others.

There's other people who believe that, well, we should not focus on the truth of God's Word and only focus on the love of God, certainly we should focus on Christ's love, but we've got to focus on the truth that's right here in the Word of God.

We don't compromise the truth and certainly we don't focus so much on truth that, well, we forget about love, the love of Christ. It's a balance between the two.

And then there's others that teach that, well, there's us in the world and it's always going to be that way. And certainly there is truth to that, there's always going to be a need for us to go into the world and proclaim the good news of the gospel.

[10:28] But that's a very negative tone that the fourth approach says, well, whatever we'll be, we'll be. I don't need to do anything about it, that's absolutely inaccurate and incorrect.

As Christians, we are to let the light of Christ shine before others, right? Just like that song, this little light of mine, I'm going to what? Let it shine, right?

What else does that say? Hide it under a bushel? No, I'm going to let it shine. So the second thing that we see here is the ministry of reconciliation.

God reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. Like I was saying, God has better plans for you. He tasks us, right?

We're saved by grace through faith so that we can do good in the name of Christ. We're not saved by what we can do, we are saved by what has been done. And because of this salvation, we are to go out and to proclaim the good news so that people can be reconciled unto God.

[11:34] Does that make sense? And so it's so important so that others will know Christ. And finally, that third part, verse 20, is being an ambassador for Christ.

As an ambassador, right? I always love that language. We are to represent Christ in all of our dealings, representing the truth of God's word and the love of Christ.

We live out Christ's message in such a way that people know that we are different. How many of you have gone to the library or the grocery store, the gas station, your school, your work, and you see someone, you interact with them, and you just know.

Somehow you know they're Christian. You can't really put your finger on them. You're like, there's something different about this person. Or maybe you felt that way before, right? Maybe someone's like, hey, there's something different about you.

Are you a Christian? And you're like, yeah, what's going on here, right? But there's something that's different about being a Christian, right? That we are set apart, that we're being transformed.

[12:34] And we're to represent Jesus Christ. We live out the message of Christ. And we, as being ambassadors, we're being a beacon of hope for others.

Don't you realize how divided this world can be? Turn on the news if you haven't. If you don't have a TV, then two thumbs up for you.

But in the world that we live in, so much negativity, so much division, so much hatred that exists in our own community and in this own country, but we have got to set our minds on things that are higher, not things that are lower, not the things that divide us, but rather the things that bring us together, the things that unite us, such as Jesus Christ, that there is hope and there is salvation that exists in Him.

And so it may, we may ask ourselves the question, what can we learn from this? The first thing is that transformation begins with us in Christ. I want to make that very clear.

It's not transformation beginning with us. It's us in Christ. And I love the Romans chapter 12 verse 2. Many of you may know that. Do not be conformed to this pattern of this world, but be what?

[13:51] Transformed by the renewing of your mind. Isn't it interesting that the idea of repentance is the changing of the mind, right? We change our mind about who Christ is and we change our mind as we're saved, as we're growing in Christ.

We continue to repent. Our minds are being changed and in turn they are being transformed. So this directly speaks of worldly Christians, right? That we are set apart and we have a mission. There's so much for us to do in regarding being the beacon of hope, representing Christ, be transformed by the renewal of your mind. The second thing that we can learn from this is living as the light of the world.

You are the light of the world that your light shine for others. When we become a Christian, that is the greatest decision that you can make in this life that has eternal consequences.

You have a decision to make. Are you going to receive the free gift of salvation? Or are you going to reject it? I can't make that decision for you. I can tell you about it, but at the end of the day you make that decision.

[15:07] And so, receiving the light, love and truth of Jesus Christ, why would you want to hide that? Why would you not want to let your friends and your family or Uncle Steve that is an alcoholic, if you have anyone named Steve that isn't an alcoholic?

I apologize, it's an example here. But think about it, we have Thanksgiving coming up. We have the holidays, we have Christmas, and don't raise your hand, but how many of us have that one family member that didn't vote like we did?

Or they don't believe what we do? And you just hope that they're not there. I wouldn't wish ill on any of our families, but we can all relate, we have family members like that.

Think about how you can be a representative of Christ in your own family context with Thanksgiving coming up, Christmas, the holidays, or whenever you see your family members.

Let us remember that being saved by grace, we are justified, and there's the process of sanctification becoming more like Him becoming more like Christ every single day.

[16:20] My friends, we are a work in progress. Amen? Are we there yet? We're still being molded, we're still being transformed and changed every single day.

That's why God calls for us. First, we've got to have that relationship, we've got to believe in Him. And we're all on this journey in Christ together, going towards the Lord.

Like I've given you that imagery before of vessels being transported to the place that they belong, like what you learned in Ezra. What a wonderful representation of the journey in Christ to be filled with the Holy Spirit, knowing that you are on this journey to the place that you belong with other vessels.

Or much like how Christ being the great shepherd is leading the sheep over to green pastures. The third thing is engaging culture without compromise.

And that's so important for us, right? Jesus calls for us to engage in the world and we are to remain set apart.

[17:28] We have to remember, we don't hide away from the world. We are set apart so that we go into the world. We do good in the name of Christ, we speak truth in love for some of us, it's defending the faith, but it's intentionally remaining rooted in Christ.

We think of the imagery or the language of Christ when he's teaching about parables, the seed that is planted on good soil. That there is the seed representing the word, being in our hearts and growing and that's part of the transformation language here.

We need to set our minds on things that are higher and not things that are lower. Again, we shouldn't be arguing over silly things. I don't want to call it stupid things, but it's the reality here, right?

We set our minds on things that are higher, the things that bring us together, not the things that divide us. And the fourth thing here, the fourth lesson is transforming culture through small words and deeds.

Now, you'll see here James chapter 3 verses 4 through 5, I love this. Take ships as an example. They are so large and driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go.

[18:49] Now, in the context of James, it's talking about the power of the tongue, right? Many of us know in Proverbs where it says death and life in the tongue, right? We see that throughout Scripture.

And in the similar way, just as James is mentioning the power of the words that we say, so too must we be mindful of the actions that we have for other people. Does that make sense?

We're to be mindful of what we say and how we conduct our lives. And so James is mentioning the power of the tongue. And think about small words and deeds.

We think of random acts of kindness, right? You guys remember pay it forward to us? Anybody pay it forward anymore? Okay, so we kind of all, right? You buy someone's, someone behind you, right? You buy their meal and whatever and they bought like \$50 worth of food because they had a big family. But you still do it anyways because it's an act of kindness, right? That not only matters in the eyes of God, but it also matters to people.

[19:53] Because if they ever talk to you, why did you do that? Well, I do it because I love people will tell me more about it. It's about building those relationships. It's not about us shoving down our faith down someone's throat.

It's about the relationships we have, the small actions that we can do, the deeds that we can do.

And in all of this, it then comes to the question then of how can we live out these verses?

The first thing that comes up is number one. What does it say? Be saved, right? You got to become a Christian first and foremost and embrace, continue to transformation.

Ephesians chapter four verses 22 through 24 says, Put off your old self and put on the new self created to be like God.

First, you got to believe in Jesus Christ, believe in the death, burial and resurrection, believe that certainly we are sinners in need of a savior, that God has so much, so many better things in store for us.

[21:03] Commit to let God work in and through your life. Let him work in your life. So often sometimes we can be very resistant to what God has called for our own lives.

I know when I think of my own walk with the Lord, there have been, I'll be very transparent with you. For many years, I neglected God's call for me to go into ministry because I was too stubborn.

But here's the thing, it was like five years I was being stubborn. I was still serving the Lord, but not in the capacity he wanted me to. It took that much of my stubbornness to lay it aside, to know that God had something better in store for me.

And now I look back at those five years and think, why was I doing that? Why was I not listening to the Lord, right? Hindsight's 20/20 and you probably can identify as well of times where God wanted you to do something or to not do something.

And you didn't listen. How often do we remember that part? I should have listened right away, right?

So we have continued transformation. Let God work in and through your life, right?

[22:14] Let God shape you. Having a relationship, spending time with God in prayer, right? Reading Scripture and also being in Christian community, I can tell you that some of the best relationships, friendships that I have ever made, and maybe some of you can identify, has been in the church.

Knowing that we are to be there for one another, helping encourage one another to grow in Christ.

There's just something that's beautiful about the church, the local body, the assembly.

And the next thing, number two, is to represent Christ in every interaction. Now I know in Colossians, as some of you have been here when I did Colossians, that verse is talking about the role that people are in.

But it's definitely applicable for even us, that whatever you do, you do it in the name of Jesus Christ. That should be an encouragement for you.

Think about that. The work that you do, if you're a child or if you're going to school or if you're going to work, you work diligently for the Lord. As though it's for the Lord.

[23:23] Now granted, our bosses and our teachers are not perfect, right? I'm going to get an amen on that, right? There's a lot of imperfect people, but God is perfect.

And so do it as though you're doing it for the Lord. Do it in the name of the Lord Jesus. And I want you to think that every interaction that you have is a chance to reflect Christ's love, truth and grace.

Think of it like that. Sometimes we meet people, right? We have people that cut us off when we're driving. We have people that take too long because they had change at Walmart. And they're paying with their change and you've got somewhere to be because you're running late. Think about those as opportunities to reflect Christ's love and grace with others. I know it's a challenge for us, trust me. Not that that's ever happened to me. I haven't been in the grocery store where someone was paying with change and they didn't have enough change. That's never happened.

[24:25] We've all had our own situations, right? And so the third thing then is to be a light in your community. Let your light shine before others.

Intentionally let your faith shine through those acts of kindness, through service and through truth. Again, the words that we say has a profound impact on people.

Just like in Scripture it says, death and life are in the power of the tongue. That's a very heavy verse, right? Also consider your actions. I've mentioned before the ministry of presence.

Are you present when you're talking with someone or are you quick to go? We all do it. I know we do. Are you quick to go here when you're spending time with your family or you're spending time in the moment?

It's being present in the moment. So be a light in your community, right? The words that you say and the actions that you do, it matters to God and it matters to others.

[25:27] Again, it doesn't save you though. And I don't want you leaving today thinking that. But we are saved by grace through faith so that we can do good in the name of Christ.

And the fourth thing here is to transform culture as the body of Christ. Not only is there personal transformation that happens in our lives, but there is also transformation that happens in the church, happens in our community.

We are called to be an ambassador for Christ. We are called as the body to work together, right? To be united in Christ. How good is it when brothers and sisters come together in unity?

Think about that. Let's not focus on those things that divide us. We have a mission that God has set before us to share in the good news of the gospel with others.

To let people know that there is hope in Jesus Christ and that God has a much greater plan for you. Knowing that God can work in and through us, changing our lives every single day and that you may not be the man or the woman that you were before you knew the Lord.

[26:40] Your own testimony, how God has worked in your life, the miracles, the healings that have happened in your own life. That's an encouragement for us. We're not to hide our light under a bushel.

We are to let it shine. And so, let us think of what imagine for a moment the profound impact that we can have in the community with our friends and our families, not only as an individual, but together, united as the body of Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 12 verse 27, you are the body of Christ and each one of you is a part of it. Now, what part of the body you are? I don't know.

Some of us would not want to be a nose. I get it. But we all have our part. We all contribute to the body of Christ. And knowing that God works in and through our lives every single day should be motivation for us.

So, I challenge you. I want you to reflect as we're closing on how each of us is part of the body of Christ. And we are called to grow in Christ, right?

[27:54] To know the Lord, believe in Him, be saved, to grow in Him, be filled with the Holy Spirit, be transformed every single day. And to go out into the world and do good in the name of Christ. The people that we interact with, right?

Our friends and our family, our coworkers, our fellow students, right? If it's someone you haven't called in a while, if it's someone you haven't seen in a while, reflect on that.

I challenge you for it because look, with so much that's changing in our own world and in our own culture, it can give us a lot of unease, but we've got to reflect on what is our foundation?

It's in Christ. We believe in Christ and we should not be ashamed of the gospel. We shouldn't be afraid. So, let's not hide away. Let's not habitually sin, but let's be moved by the Holy Spirit to

engage culture.

And let us remember just as the title of that, the title of this sermon, Christ is the transformer of culture. Our calling in a broken world is to go out being ambassadors for Christ, knowing that we are changed and that we are to partake in the ministry of reconciliation.

[29:19] Let's pray together. Dear Lord and Heavenly Father, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, we're so grateful that we've had this opportunity to go through this message today.

Just going through of how great you are. You are the sovereign God. You are in control, but in all of this, you call for us to have a relationship with you.

Father, I pray that your Holy Spirit will work in and through every single person here and every single person online. Father, I don't know the battles that may, each person may be going through, but I pray that you will comfort them.

I pray for healing. I pray for transformation in this church. That we can partake in the ministry of reconciliation, that we first and foremost believe in you and are saved by grace through faith, that we are moved to proclaim your name and that we are ambassadors for Christ.

Father, we realize that there has been a lot of changes that has been going on in our world. And we pray that the Holy Spirit will work in and through our lives, our friends, our families, those community leaders, and those in political office.

[30:44] Pray for transformation, for repentance, for healing, but also for leading and guiding. We love you so much. We thank you that we can come here today and sing songs that praise your name, but also hear the truth from your word.

We love you, we praise you, we glorify you, and we honor you. It is in the name of Jesus Christ, the cornerstone of our faith that we pray, and we all say together, amen, amen.

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May God's blessings be with you.