

### So, what's new?

I was thinking of my Dad recently... every time I spoke with him on the phone he would say, "So, what's new with you?" How often, when you speak to someone, does he or she say that to you? And how often have you responded, "Oh, nothing much. How 'bout you?" I cannot help wondering what would happen if we Christians here at the beginning of "fall" (and let's face it, even if we're no longer in school, and even if the temperature is averaging way too hot, with back to school activities, it can feel like a whole season) had the courage to say "I'll tell you what's new, me. God is continuing to make me a



new creation.... here's how....." Jeremiah is one of my favorite prophets, perhaps because I had an opportunity to study him with the women's group during my internship year. Anyway, long before Jesus ever walked this earth, God's prophet Jeremiah had an inspired vision of a totally new age when the Messiah would come and God's kingdom would be established on this earth. Jeremiah envisioned that the Messiah's coming would mean a whole new beginning for those who trusted in the salvation the Lord would bring. This was not and is not an empty promise. I had to smile when I heard of a little boy who went to his first Little League baseball practice. His father asked how it went, and he said, "The coach says I'm the best of the worst three!" That's having a positive attitude, yet Jeremiah envisions something far more radical than a positive outlook -- a complete change, a fresh start, a whole new beginning for those who will put their trust in God. That's God's promise to each of us. I know, I know .... it's only August, yet this time of year can feel like a "New Year's" celebration, a chance to start fresh. This can be a time to focus anew on God's grace and promises. This can be a time to set some new habits and priorities. Jed was a business executive who up until a year ago had very little time for God or for the church. His career was all that mattered in his life. But knowing that he was missing something, he accepted a friend's suggestion to join him in a six-week study of the Bible. The group met each week for prayer and study, and Jed found he enjoyed the meetings. Then, on the last night together, the leader of the Bible study asked the group to share anything new in their lives as a result of their time together. To his own amazement, Jed found himself saying, "I am forgiven!" Tears were in his eyes as he added, "I know in my heart that Jesus has forgiven me! I'm not the same person I was six weeks ago! I have a whole new life ahead of me!" What's new? You are, I am. Jeremiah says when the Messiah comes, people like us can have a whole new beginning. Luther says that each and every day as we remember our baptism we are reminded that we are new creations, loved and cared for by God. Still more than that, Jeremiah envisioned not only a new start, but a whole new life. It is not just that in Christ God wipes the slate clean of our sinful past. In Christ, we can begin living in a whole new way -- in the way of love, truth, righteousness (rightness with God), peace, and justice! Each and every day the Holy Spirit helps us become new people who live in a whole new way! I once saw a T-shirt that had a picture on it of an apple with a bite taken out of it. Above the apple was written, "Not Perfect." Below the apple were the words, "Just Forgiven." There is little question about our being "not perfect." That is your story and mine. However, we are more in Christ than "just forgiven." In Christ we are new people, forgiven and renewed in a way that we can begin living a whole new life each day. That's the good news -- probably the best news this old world has had for a very long time! So next time, when someone asks you, "What's new," consider your answer and perhaps share with them the good news: "I am, each and every day!!" In Jesus, we can become a whole new person! Blessings and joy! Pastor Karen