New Life: A Real Chance at Real Change

Mark 14: 50, Acts 2:4

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Do you like a **prodigy** story? The kid who was just always clearly superior to her/his peers? [Tiger Woods, Yo Yo Ma, etc…]

What’s better than a prodigy story?

A **transformation** story. Prodigies are out of reach, but transformation is possible…

The ugly duckling who becomes the beautiful swan. [Michael Jordan, Grinch, etc.]

We love transformation stories because we long for change in ourselves and others; we know how hard it is; so, we love when we think we see it.

**Psychologists** tell us that most people don’t really change.

[When was the last time you really changed through an act of decision?]

Personality theory indicates that there are some levels of personality that can change, but some parts of us are kind of set for life.

This is kind of a **pessimistic** view, I think. But it does ring true to experience…

 [My experience in Warren as a brand-new pastor]

“We die about like we live…”

There is **one place** where we see real change and that is in the stories of the Bible

[The Chosen—Mary Magdalene, Season 1, episode 1]

In the gospels, in order to be transformed, you had to be able to find Jesus, and receive a miracle.

**Today I want to take you through the story of the end of Jesus’ life and the birth of the movement we would later call the church because it is not just full of transformation but leads us right to the Source of the change.**

The Disciple’s Story

I. Desertion (Mark 14)

* The **headings** in my Bible: The Last Supper, Jesus Predicts Peter’s Denial, Gethsemane, Jesus Arrested…ominous titles describing the final hours of Jesus’ life.
* When Jesus needed his friends the most, they fled in fear
* “Then everyone deserted him and fled.” --Mark 14: 50

II. Experience with the Risen Lord (Luke 24)

* **Women** find the tomb empty and speak to angels (24: 1-6a)
* Road to **Emmaus** (24:13-35)
* **Upper** room (24:33-36)
* (Acts 1:3)—"He presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive.”

III. Learning from Jesus (Acts 1)

* **40** **days** with Jesus (1:3b)
* Jesus taught about the **Kingdom** of God
* Jesus instructed them that there was **something more** that God wanted to do (1:4-5)

IV. Infilling with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2)

* On the Day of **Pentecost**, the Spirit was given to all believers in Jesus
* Wind, Fire, Language, Power (2: 1-4)

V. Dramatic Change (Acts 2)

* “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit enabled them.” (Acts 2:4)
* The **Denier** (Peter) becomes The **Declarer**
* He **preaches** boldly
* The other **disciples** come out of hiding, minister to the crowd, encouraging, organizing, baptizing

Our Story

I. We are no strangers to failure and fleeing

* Let’s have all the **perfect** **people** please stand up…
* Nobody’s **batting 1000** this morning?
* We’ve all failed (Romans 3:23, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”)
* We’ve also fallen short of the expectations of **others** and even **ourselves**
* That brings with it a level of **shame** that we all bear in one way or another
* “Life stinks and then you die…” is the summary of life without God

II. We can experience the risen Lord, resurrection

* God has made it possible to be freed from our failures and shame
* **John 3:16**
* **“Born again”** from last week’s message. **New start and new life**.
* That was a long time ago, though. How does it matter now?
* **Resurrection**, the power of shame and sin is broken by Jesus whose death and resurrection puts on full display the power of God over sin, death, hell, and the grave.
* Our **Triune** **God**, through the work of the Holy Spirit, brings this forgiveness to you and to me…time and place is no longer a factor. You can know Jesus’ forgiveness here and now.

III. We can learn from Jesus

* Not just **can**, but **should**
* It’s why I asked you to reach out to me after last week’s sermon on salvation
* Discipleship isn’t an **optional** **plan** for the really serious converts
* Discipleship is God’s **action** **plan** following every salvation
* If Jesus were here in person, we might be discipled in 40 days
* Since he now works by the Spirit, discipleship is a lifelong and wonderful journey

IV. We need to be filled with the Holy Spirit

* The **Holy** **Spirit** makes the work of God possible in our lives, all the works of God
* The Disciples **needed some time** to process their following of Jesus and **then** they sought to be filled with the Spirit
* **This is still true today**
* We need some time after meeting Jesus to learn to **trust** him, to **know** him, to **long** for more of him…
* As we get to know Jesus, we can and should **invite his Holy Spirit** to **move** **into** every area of our lives…nothing held back.
* It’s what we call the first step of **sanctification**. **I surrender all of me and invite Jesus by the Spirit to fill every inch of my being.**
* When we ask and when he does…

V. We can know a dramatic change

* Here is where **psychological theorizing** breaks down
* **We don’t have to die like we have been living…**
* We don’t have to **muddle** through life and then fade into a meaninglessness
* We can, by the power of God’s Holy Spirit, be changed…**truly changed.**
* We get, according to the scriptures:
	+ A new **Power** – Resurrection Power
	+ A new **Presence** – God’s Holy Spirit
	+ A new **Practice** – Your life a witness to God living through me
* When you invite the Holy Spirit to **“move in” and “take up residence”** in all the rooms of your life, you can finally live up to Jesus’ commandment.
* You experience the ultimate expression of the **Great Commandment:**
* You have a new capacity to love **God**
* You have a new capacity to love your **neighbor**

**You can encounter this kind of transformation in your own life by inviting the power of the Holy Spirit to fill you.**

Pastor, is it possible?

* It is and it’s essential
* God loves you too much to leave you floundering around in your brokenness
* [New Town: Confusing directions or someone to guide you?]
* The Holy Spirit can fill you up and walk you to and through real change.
* The Holy Spirit is your real chance for real change.

**Prayer:** Jesus, I long to change, but I can’t get there on my own. I’m learning to know you. I trust you. I want your Holy Spirit to move into every part of my life. I’m surrendering all of me today. Fill me with your Spirit, Jesus. -Amen.

Text for Prayer and Follow Up: 913-214-9123. Name. “I prayed the prayer.”

**Communion:** *At home, you can prepare your elements. In a few moments when it comes time to partake, if you are at home and practicing intinction, just wait until we drink the cup. That way we can all partake together. I’ll address the online group directly.*

*Those present today: Please take a moment and adjust or remove your mask so that you can partake of the elements. Also take a quick moment and familiarize yourselves with these individually wrapped communion elements. There is a thin layer of plastic covering the wafer, then another layer that opens up the cup for drinking. Take a moment and get all of that ready.*

Communion, instituted by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is a sacrament, which proclaims His life, His sufferings, His sacrificial death, and resurrection, and the hope of His coming again.

Communion is a means of grace in which Christ is present by the Spirit. It is to be received in reverent appreciation and gratefulness for the work of Christ.

Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, went about preaching, teaching, healing, and announcing the Kingdom of God. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. He rose again on the third day and is seated at the right hand of God the Father. He will return to judge the living and the dead.

All those who are truly repentant, forsaking their sins, and believing in Christ for salvation are invited to participate.

**Prayer:**

Holy God,

We gather at this, your table, in the name of Jesus your Son, who by your Spirit was anointed to preach good news to the poor, proclaim release to the captives, set at liberty those who are oppressed. Christ healed the sick, fed the hungry, ate with sinners, and established the new covenant for forgiveness of sins. We live in the hope of His coming again.

And so, we gather as the Body of Christ to offer ourselves to you in praise and thanksgiving. Pour out your Holy Spirit on us and on these your gifts. Make them by the power of your Spirit to be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the Body of Christ, redeemed by His blood.

By your Spirit make us one in Christ, one with each other, and one in the ministry of Christ to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, **Amen**.

**Song: Thank You Jesus For the Blood**

**Before the partaking of the bread, let the minister say:**

The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, broken for you, preserve you blameless, unto everlasting life. Eat this in remembrance that Christ died for you, and be thankful.

**Before the partaking of the cup, let the minister say:**

The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, shed for you, preserve you blameless unto everlasting life. Drink this in remembrance that Christ died for you, and be thankful.

**Song: Thank You Jesus For the Blood**