1 – 6 – 2019 Message – New Beginnings

 Every day is a new beginning. How do you wake up at the beginning of a new day?

Video

 Are you happy and feel new, or do you roll out, slide out and spend your day like Eeyore under a dark rainy cloud?

 The book of Lamentations focuses on the trauma experienced by Judah at the hands of the Babylonians. They destroyed the temple, the palace, and the capital city. This devastation was not merely sociopolitical, it was also deeply theological and spiritual, **but** in chapter 3 verses 22 – 24 is such hope and blessing.

 *22 Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. 23 They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. 24 I say to myself, “The LORD is my portion; therefore, I will wait for Him.”*

 This is the hope and beauty of a new morning with new mercies awaiting us. Today is that new day, rejoice and be grateful.

 Do you struggle at times with the passages in the [**Bible**](https://www.biblestudytools.com/) about God making us into NEW creations; verses that tell us God is doing a NEW thing?

 Do you wonder, why isn’t He doing something NEW in you? Do you think I want to be a new person in Christ! New beginnings. New creations. Our God is a God of all things new.

 God gently reminds us that if we are to trust Him, we will take Him at His Word. His Word tells us that each of us are new creations in Him. If we are Christ followers, He is making us new.

 But God’s timing is not our timing, it may not happen as quickly as we would like. God isn’t a magic genie who snaps His fingers and makes us a new creation in a blink, although He can.

 In 2 Corinthians 5: 14 - 22 Paul writes, I am reading from the Message

 *Our firm decision is to work from this focused center: One man died for everyone. That puts everyone in the same boat. He included everyone in His death so that everyone could also be included in His life, a resurrection life, a far better life than people ever lived on their own.*

 *Because of this decision we don’t evaluate people by what they have or how they look. We looked at the Messiah that way once and got it all wrong, as you know.*

 *We certainly don’t look at Him that way anymore. Now we look inside, and what we see is that anyone united with the Messiah gets a fresh start, is created new. The old life is gone; a new life burgeons it flourishes!*

*Look at it! All this comes from the God who settled the relationship between us and him, and then called us to settle our relationships with each other. God put the world square with himself through the Messiah, giving the world a fresh start by offering forgiveness of sins. God has given us the task of telling everyone what he is doing.*

 *We’re Christ’s representatives. God uses us to persuade men and women to drop their differences and enter into God’s work of making things right between them.*

 *We’re speaking for Christ Himself now: Become friends with God; He’s already a friend with you.*

 Today we will focus on 2 Corinthians 5: 17 *Therefore, if* ***anyone*** *is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

 Are any of you familiar with Star Trek? I started watching the TV show when it first came out in 1966 and kept watching through the movies and later versions of the TV show.

 It gave me a sense of hope for the future of mankind seeing all the races, genders, ethnicities, and intergalactic beings working together, though often with some pretty far-fetched amazingly noisy devices, for the greater good.

 One of the Star Trek Movies, the Genesis Project was responsible for not only bringing a dead planet back to life... it was also instrumental in bringing a beloved member of the crew -- who had died -- back to life.

 Something like what happens when we get saved, not with all the phaser flashes and worlds exploding. But when we invite Jesus into our hearts... He takes our dead, sinful, lives... He recreates us... gives us all new life.

**1. The Gospel Message is for EVERYONE**

 Our text says, "IF ANYONE is in Christ, he is a new creation, The Gospel Message is for ANYONE and EVERYONE... regeneration is available for all humanity.

 God is not willing for anyone to perish but for all to come to repentance.

 But… that little word "if" is the conditional factor... you have to meet certain conditions for this to apply to you... "If anyone is IN CHRIST, he is a new creation".

 If you are lost, dead in your sin, lifeless in your spiritual walk... come to Christ and He will give you new life... He will regenerate you... He will make you a New Creation!!

 You just have to be IN Christ! In Christ is one of Paul’s favorite ways to describe the close intimate relationship that we have with Christ Jesus.

 What does it mean to "be in Christ" or as written in other versions "belong to Christ" or "united with the Messiah"?

 Paul wrote in Romans 8: *9 But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all.)*

 We were created by God in His image with a human body and a spirit deep within. When we receive Christ Jesus as Savior and Lord, He cleanses us of our sins and is the living Spirit of God in us.

 Paul reveals his heart in the familiar verse Galatians 2: 20 *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

 And in Romans 12: *2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will.*

 Christ lives in His followers, those who believe in Him and love Him with heart, mind, body, and spirit, have committed and surrendered to the plan and purpose of Christ Jesus.

 **Christlike living is not a matter of behaving like Christ, it is getting out of the way, and as Pastor said last week, dying to self and allowing Christ Himself to live in and work through us.**

**2. The Old Has Gone**

 "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, **the old is gone**", some versions say, "the old things are passed away" another way of saying the old stuff dies.

 You cannot avoid the physical aging process, but these old things refer to the life you lived in sin, before Jesus moved in and made you a new Creation.

 The old hurts, habits and hang-ups you carry around that influence and hinder your relationship with God and others are the old things that are gone, if you are willing to let them go.

 When you accept Christ Jesus as Savior and Lord, you don't merely turn over a new leaf. You are given a new life, recreated under new management.

 Paul wrote in Colossians 1: 13 – 14 *13 For He has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of His dear Son, 14 who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.*

 As we surrender ourselves to the life transforming works of the Holy Spirit those old things that hinder your growth in Christ can be removed by the power that raised Jesus from the grave.

 As you probably know by now, I have a passion for Christian music. It seems to have a power of its own to move people to repent.

 *Tell Your Heart to Beat Again*, one of those songs, made popular by Danny Gokey expresses the need to let go of the stuff, the junk that keeps you from a deeper relationship with Christ Jesus, your brothers and sisters in Christ, and His Church. The chorus is:

Tell your heart to beat again
Close your eyes and breathe it in
Let the shadows fall away
Step into the light of grace
Yesterday's a closing door
You don't live there anymore
Say goodbye to where you've been
And tell your heart to beat again

 In Isaiah 43: 18 is recorded from the Lord; 18 *“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past."*

 Paul shared with other believers in Philippians 3: 13 – 14 about pressing on to perfection; *13 No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.*

 The choice is yours, do you let go, say goodbye to all that stuff from the shadows, step into the Grace of God, and let your new life in Christ take over?

**3. The New Has Come**

 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone,* ***the new has come!***

 There it is! Right on the pages of God’s Word we are told that we are being made new. We can choose to believe it and walk in that truth, or we can deny the power of God to change even the deadest of hearts into hearts softened with love. He is making all things new, He is bringing the dead back to life!

 Can I ask you a question this morning? What do you have to lose by giving God a chance to Prove Himself to you? You don’t have anything to lose, but you have everything to gain!

 You have a heavenly Father who so loves you... It really doesn’t matter what you think of yourself... God loves you... right where you're at... you don’t have to clean up your act for Him before you ask Him into your life.... that’s the irony...

 Satan tells you that you have to clean up your act before Christ will accept you...... But the truth is You can’t clean up your act... you're not capable of cleaning up your act... if you could, if I could… We wouldn’t need a Christ Jesus as Savior.

 Jesus says come... right where you're at.... He’s not surprised by where you're at... He’s God! He knows what sin does, He understands how it tangles you up, how it brings you down, how sin takes you places you never intended to go.... He knows... He died for those sins... Jesus has an answer for your dead end... Jesus has an answer for your frustration, for your pain, for your hurts, habits, and hang-ups.... Jesus has an answer for your marriage... Jesus has an answer for your loneliness... for your feeling of helplessness... **Jesus is the answer**...

 Paul wrote in Ephesians 2: 4 – 6 *4 But God is so rich in mercy, and He loved us so much, 5 that even though we were dead because of our sins, He gave us new life when He raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God’s grace that you have been saved!) 6 For He raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus.*

 I can’t explain it to you... Only God can do it... He gave you and me New Life, New Purpose, a Passion and a Love for God and for people that doesn’t go away, in fact, I don’t understand how, but it keeps getting stronger... and I can tell you this morning... Christ Jesus is the Lord of my life.... He’s the only reason I stand here today... He’s the reason you have hope this morning....

 In John 13: 34 – 35 Jesus is revealing the new thing: *34 So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. 35 Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”*

 We see in this passage that while Jesus was here on earth, even He was doing a new thing! He was teaching believers a new way of living, a new commandment, a new covenant: to love as we have been loved.

 Christ Jesus is our Genesis Project and He came way before Star Trek. The Enterprise, for those of you who are not familiar, is the spaceship, and was almost always the only ship in the quadrant that could handle the present danger.

 Christ Jesus is the only way to new life now and life eternal with God in Heaven.

 2 Corinthians 5: 17 *Therefore, if**anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

 God wants to do a complete renovation, He wants to make you brand new! All He needs is the location and permission to recreate.

 If anyone is ready to choose new life in Christ or recommit their lives to Christlike living, please come to the alter as we sing "I Surrender All".

 This morning I would like to close with the reading of a prayer we received at the worship last Sunday. There is a copy in your bulletin, let's read together and take your copy home to recommit anew every morning.

**A Covenant Prayer in the Wesleyan Tradition**
I am no longer my own, but thine.
Put me to what thou wilt,

Rank me with whom thou wilt.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be employed by thee or laid aside by thee.
Exalted for thee or brought low for thee.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and heartily yield all things

To thy pleasure and disposal.
And now, O glorious and Blessed God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
Thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on earth,
Let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.