



BelPres Church

Made New

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Well, hello, great to see all of you here. Thank you. Thank you for being here today. And those of you online, thank you for joining us as well.

My son is a swim coach and also an athletic trainer, and for a Christmas we bought him this big huge book on athletic training called *Rebuilding Milo*, whoever Milo is. And for Christmas, he gave me some free sessions with him to do a new, create a new workout plan for me because my old one is kind of not working anymore. It's kind of stale. But I've been traveling a lot for work this month, so I haven't been able to do those sessions with him yet. So my kids have been joking that as of now, I am an unrebuilt Milo.

However, now that February is here, they're get ready because there's going to be an amazing transformation of all of this. You will be dazzled by it.

We're doing a sermon series about all the different ways Jesus is good news in our lives. And one of those ways is he rebuilds us. He transforms us. He makes us new. Not marginally better at doing sin management, not nicer, but new. He's after something so much bigger than just some kind of self improvement plan. Jesus says I am making all things new. He didn't come to start a religion. He didn't come to just give us some knowledge. His mission is nothing less than to renew this earth to be like his heaven, and to renew you and me to be more like Him.

Jesus combined courage and compassion, truth and grace. He used his power to protect rather than to bully. And I want to be like him. And I guessing that you want to be like him too, because he's a pretty cool person to be like, free

from repeated habitual sin, free from sexual lust that imprisons the rage that hurts other people, worry and anxiety that still are sleepless nights. Jesus says I am making all things new and the definition of all things is all things, which means that includes you and me and even those things where we have almost given up hope that they're ever going to change.

So if you have a Bible, turn to 2nd Corinthians chapter 5. Or you can feel free to, you know, use the table of contents to find it or you can follow along on the screens. And if you don't have a Bible, that's OK. I forgot mine this morning and my wife had to bring it to me because I need one with gigantic prints. So.

So this was written by the apostle Paul to the to Christians in the city of Corinth. And Corinth was one of was one of the wealthiest cities in the Roman Empire. It it, it, it, it valued education and achievement and money and sexual freedom. Does that sound vaguely familiar to you?

And in this text, Paul talks about sharing the good news of Jesus with others. And last week, Pastor Ian preached on this same passage. I'm going to come at it from a different angle because one text can mean a lot of different things. So Paul talking about sharing the good news of Jesus and then starting in verse 14 for Christ love compels us because we are convinced that one died for all and therefore all died and he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised again.

In other words, He came to make us new, living a different way. So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view that we once regarded Christ in this way. We do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come, the old is gone, and the new is here. Now.

Some translations will translate this. If anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation or they are becoming a new creation, or they are continually being renewed as a new creation. And there are a lot of ways that Jesus makes us new. I'm just going to stick to the ones that emerge from this particular passage.

And to be made new, first we have to start with Jesus love. Look at verse 14 for Christ's love compels us compel. That's a strong verb. And in the original Greek, the word that's used there can also mean controls. So when we experience Jesus love not as a theology in our brains, but as an experience in our hearts, it starts to take over. It controls us, it becomes our operating system and we begin to live differently.

And This is why it's different than a self improvement plan where we just try harder. It's also about experiencing Jesus love in real ways that has a supernatural power to change us. And we can experience his love in lots of different ways, certainly in worship, especially if we're paying attention that he's here and kind of asking him to speak to us through the words and the and the sermon. We experienced his love in prayer, in scripture, in community and in relational as opposed to transactional prayer.

So transactional prayer is when we say, help me with this and thank you for that. Those are good prayers. But relational prayer is when we have conversations with Jesus. So for instance, just to practice this this week, for instance, this week when you pray, try some of these. Jesus, what do you want to say to me about me, about my ambitions, about my sins, my shame, my secrets?

And then listen for how he might respond to you, which may be thoughts that he puts in your head, memories that suddenly come up, Scripture verses that he brings to mind, maybe something someone says to you later that day or later this month. When we experience in a relational way prayer, scripture worship, how much he loves us, it begins to change us and helps us do the next thing in being transformed, which is to let Jesus tell you the truth in both affirming and correcting ways.

So Jesus telling the truth in affirming ways looks something like when we're trapped in shame, Jesus reminds us that we're forgiven. Or when we think we're not smart enough or good looking enough or successful enough, too much this, not enough of that. Jesus tells us the truth of who we really are. You are not who your parents say you are, not who your boss says you are, not who various cultural messages say that you are. You are child of God, redeemed in Jesus Christ, being made new by the power of His Holy Spirit. That's who God says you are. Don't argue with him. Doesn't usually go well.

Jesus also tells us the truth in ways that we need to grow. He does affirming truth and ways we need to grow truth, not to burden us with guilt and shame, but so that we can be made new. So if what we hear him say in prayer or scripture or whatever sounds like shame and blame and harsh judgment, that's not his voice. His voice sounds more like, I love you so much. I need to tell you this thing you're doing if we're going to wreck you. And I've got a better way and I'll help you get there if you want it.

And it's never pleasant to be told we are on a wrong Rd. But here's the thing. You can be told that you're right, or you can grow. You pick. You can be told that you're right or you can grow.

We can read the Bible in a way that it never challenges anything we think, do or say, always gives us the thumbs up on everything that we want and desire. Or we can let the Bible trouble us. Pay special attention to the parts that we don't like. Those are some of the most important parts that we, the ones we don't like, let them work on us.

We also need people who will tell us in love, not judgement ways that we need to grow in a loving way. I heard a woman recently, she said she was doing a Bible lesson with her five and seven-year old kids and was kind of feeling proud about herself. Like, oh man, I'm a good mom. I'm doing a Bible lesson with my kids. And at the end was a prayer about acknowledging our mistakes and asking God to forgive us. And she decided to make it interactive experience. So she said to her kids, what's one way that mommy makes mistakes or gets things wrong?

And very seriously, her seven-year old son said, pass me that notebook so I can make a list.

OK, That's not how we need to be told the truth. It's a little harsh, a little not loving, right? That's not how we need to be told the truth in love so that we can grow.

Let Jesus tell you that truth and then that helps us do the next step in transformation, which is to repent. The word repent means to turn around and go a different direction, and without repentance there can be no transformation.

So look at verse 16 again. So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. In other words, Paul saw things one way people, but not just people, the whole world one way. But after Jesus, he saw it another. The ways he thought about the world and other people were wrong, so he changed.

When we're doing things the Bible tells us not to do, that's called sin, or not doing what it tells us to do, also called sin, and reaping the consequences of that. We have to turn around and ask Jesus to help us go a different direction. Because here's the thing, Jesus wants to make us new, but he will not force us. He will not force us. And the way we cooperate with His Holy Spirit and signal to

him we want to be made new is when we repent. Jesus, I'm going the wrong way. Help me turn around.

And what gives us the confidence to do that is knowing that we are loved. Because if you know that you will be met with love, not judgement, then it's easier to repent because you know you're just going to be met with love.

Which then leads to the next step in transformation, which is to let Jesus reorder our loves. Verse 16. Again, from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. As Paul got closer to Jesus, he saw people from Jesus perspective, but not just people things. Things that he thought were important after he met Jesus suddenly were less important. Things he used to think weren't important at all after he met Jesus suddenly become more important to him.

Someone's his priorities were switched. His loves were switched. Someone's title or money or job or looks were no longer important to him. For that matter, his title, his money, his success was less important to him because Jesus reordered his priorities and reordered his loves.

One of the ways that we do that is when we serve other people. Today out in the lobby, you'll see some tables. It's it's what we're calling Super Serve Sunday, kind of like Super Bowl Sunday in honor of the fact that next week will be a rematch of the 2015 Super Bowl against the Patriots, only this time we're going to win.

And there are all kinds of opportunities out there to get involved in ministries of this church, some having to do with those Eight Unleashed projects we talked about in the fall. Others are just about the ongoing ministries of our church, and participating in these things can reorder our loves.

So, for instance, being involved in our refugee ministries reorders our loves and our priorities, because there's nothing like hearing stories from refugees who have fled horrific and violent conditions with nothing but the clothes that they have to make. The ways that I can obsess over my reputation, my success, my comfort seem less important as my heart grows in compassion for people in need and turns what is right now a political football back into what it really is, which is people.

And we sent out a video on this this week in our all church e-mail. It's on our YouTube page. And I'd encourage you to watch that video a lot. And just to

reiterate some of what we said in that plenty of room to disagree on immigration policy.

And absolutely we need good vetting to keep out criminal activity and drug trafficking. All of that those absolutely necessary, but enforcing those policies humanely really matters. Scripture says in multiple places you shall treat the foreigner as one of your native born. And in many cases that's not happening. Families being separated, little to no due process, a disproportionate focus on black and brown people, big shows of force that generate fear even in people who are here legally, like hundreds of people in our own church. And yes, some of this has happened over various administrations for 30 years, but it's still not right. No matter who's in charge, it's, it's not right.

And I think I encourage you to watch that video also, we're going to have an all church zoom forum on this on February 9th. Encourage you to be a part of that, to talk more and, and we'll be sending out information on that in a, in a day or two.

The larger point is this, when we get closer to people in need, our hearts are changed. Many of you know that being part of our Sunday school or our students ministry grows our compassion for what our young people are up against these days and grows our faith as we see Jesus transform our lives through transform their lives, these these students lives and we get to be part of that and it shifts our heart.

One of the ways Jesus makes us new is through service where we put ourselves in relationships with people who can reorder our loves and our priorities.

OK, experience Jesus love. Let Jesus tell you the truth, repent, let him reorder your loves and then finally to be made made new practice the presence of Jesus daily. Here's what I mean. The more aware we are of the fact that Jesus is present with us every minute of every day and live in His presence in every moment, the more we become like Him.

I recently heard a high school teacher who is a Christian named Laura talking to another teacher is also a Christian about how it was hard to live out her faith in her workplace. She felt there were all these constraints on her and her friend, her, her, her, her colleague said. I wonder, are you connecting with Jesus throughout your day and asking him to show you ways to practice your faith here? Are you asking constantly throughout the day?

Well, that kind of annoyed Laura at first, but then she thought of all the way. She just plows through her day and never stops to ask Jesus, show me what you're doing in this place and how can I be a part of it? She said. I hadn't stopped loving Jesus for one minute, but how many minutes had I spent with him?

So she started to go to her classroom early and pray over the desk of each of her students and she'd over each of her students and she'd frequently asked Jesus throughout her day, Show me opportunities where I can talk about my faith or show your love by how I care for someone. And after a few weeks of that, she started to realize she had better insight into her students and what they need and could be part of what God was doing in their lives.

After, you know, every morning praying over every desk, she started to act differently toward them. More patience, more focused attention. She she listened more attentively, which they noticed. She enjoyed your job more because she wasn't just plowing through her day, but she was seeing how Jesus was with her and doing things throughout her day.

Practicing his presence daily helped her be transformed, which changed how she cared for her students, which was the external evidence of the inward change that was happening in her. Because Jesus doesn't just make us new for ourselves, He makes us new for others and for people in the world.

You know, at least I, maybe you sometimes just wish God would like ZAP me in an instant and take away some of this stuff and make me more like him. Come on, let's, let's just do this all at once. Jesus. It would be more efficient, right? But in these verses, the verb, some of the verb tenses indicate an ongoing action. We are being continually made new. It's a process and it takes time.

One of my wife's lifelong goals is that our three kids would be readers. I mean, she's a novelist. It makes sense, right? She writes. But that was challenging with our son, especially when he was young because back then he needed a lot of action in a book to stay with it. Like, basically there needed to be a battle on the first page or he was out, right?

And I remember one time during Christmas break, he was probably about 12 years old, He said to Christina, I'm bored. And she said, well, read that book that I gave you. And he said, it's boring. And she said, well, how far did you get in it? And he said the first word is boring.

That is so much how I am sometimes with God. Come on God, heal me on the first word. Let's go. But Christ, like character isn't forged in an instant. It's forged every minute of our day in all the decisions we make and the ordinary places we go.

Because here's the thing, how we do little things is how we do everything. How we treat others, how we use our time, money and influence. Whether or not we make some of those ethical compromises, those white lies either move us toward or away from the transformed life Jesus wants to give us.

You know, in football, we all want the team to score quickly. I love, you know, that long pass down the field that scores a touchdown, That's awesome. I love that. But much of life, like football, is moving the chains 10 yards at a time as you run the ball.

So, for instance, next Sunday, should we find ourselves again on the Patriots 1 yard line with 30 seconds left in the game, I suggest running the ball, not passing it. Some of you know what I'm talking about, others of you don't. That's fine, I'm just offering an opinion.

Transformation. Is it too soon? Too soon?

Transformation often takes time.

So action step, do this week's exercise in the journal. The journal, if you don't have one, it's on our website. It's in our app. And last week we had some changes to our preaching schedule. So the journal was out of sync with last week. Just ignore that. Just do this week's exercise, which is think of a time when Jesus helped you change in a real way and then fill in these blanks. I used to be blank, but Jesus is helping me become blank. Do that exercise to remind yourself that Jesus is good news in your life.

Recently heard a man named Stephen talk about a time he was in law school in in England and he was a Christian. And he had this professor who was very hostile to Christianity. And one day in class, the professor was just going on and on and on about how stupid Christianity is and how stupid Christians are. And the professor said, no one believes any of this nonsense anyway, do they? And he looked right at Stephen. And Stephen shook his head, No, not me. No, not me.

And as he walked out of class, he thought I just lied. Why did I lie? And then he thought it's because I care way too much about what other people think about me, and I'm afraid it was fear. And from there he began to notice all the little compromises he made to win people's approval of him and especially the way

he hid his faith, especially the way that maybe he joined in the gossip just to be accepted in a group or maybe drink too much just to get people to think he was a fun guy. All these little compromises that he makes to win people's approval.

But as this was happening at the same time he was getting closer to Jesus, he began to experience Jesus presence more in prayer and especially in worship in his church. He could just feel Jesus presence. He joined a community group where there were people there who would tell him the truth in love sometimes when he needed it.

And then over the course of a year, he said I began to understand more of who Jesus is and what he has done for me. That he knew me to the bottom of my soul and yet loved me to the sky and paid every cost to win me. I began to experience just how deeply he did love me. And then I wasn't as afraid as I used to be to be known as a Christian. And he said, I stopped making those little compromises just to fit in and I let people know about my faith more.

Well, then one day he was praying and and God brought to mind his old professor and kind of nudged Stephen to call his old professor, which he did. And Stephen said, you know, they talked a little bit and said, shall we go for a pint? They're British. That's what they do. They go for a pint, very sophisticated. And they did.

And after talking for about half an hour, the professor stopped Stephen and said, wait, I just need to check something. The way you're talking, it sounds actually quite Christian. The press. The professor had never noticed anything Christian about Stephen before, but he did now because Stephen was being made new.

And Stephen said, well, funny you should say that. I am a Christian. And the professor said, well, since when? And Stephen said, well, actually, even back when I was in your class. And the professor said, well, why didn't you say anything when I was going on and on and on about it? And Stephen said, because you were going on and on and on about it. And I was afraid. I was afraid of what you'd think, afraid it might be held against me, afraid it might even affect my career. But I'm not afraid anymore.

That's a powerful sentence. I'm not afraid anymore. That's a different man.

The more he practiced the presence of Jesus, especially by focusing on the cross, which helped him experience Jesus love, the more he allowed God and

others to tell him the truth in loving ways, the more he repented of all those little compromises he was making just to fit in. His priorities were reordered, his loves were reordered from image and career to having Christ like character. He became braver, bolder and much more free. And those are good things to be.

Now that is not some huge dramatic story about, you know, a prisoner or something. That's dramatic change in their life. Those are good stories. I've told those stories, but far more common are the incremental daily ways Jesus changes us. We're minute by minute, day by day, year by year. As we get closer to him, we become more like Him.

The mark of a Christian is not perfection, it's progress. Are we moving forward?

And the most important word, if you know, if anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation. And I think the most important word in that verse is anyone, because sometimes we can hear that and go, yeah, maybe. But not me. I'm too far gone, or not that person. They're too far gone, right? But the definition of anyone is still anyone, which means you, me and that other person.

It doesn't say if you get good grades, if you land the promotion, if you have the right clothes size or look a certain way, if you have the right job and the right amount of money, then then, then you're acceptable and you're being made new. That's a lot of pressure and nobody has all of those things. And that makes us anxious and worried.

Don't let Satan steal your identity. Remember who you are because of who's you are, no matter your past, no matter your present, no matter what you've done or haven't done, no matter what others think of you, no matter the labels that you've been given, no matter the sin, stain, spot, or blemish in your life. If you are in Christ, the old has gone, the new has come. End of sentence. No footnotes or caveats or or fine print on that one.

If you know Jesus, you are being made a new creation and there's not a darn thing you can do about it. And that's the best news you're going to hear all week.

So Jesus, thank you that you make us new. You don't just leave us the way you found us. You love us enough to change us, transform us. We want to be like you, Lord, so help us experience your love that gives us the confidence to repent and turn to you and through your power, make us new and keep making us new through you. So much so that people notice. And when they ask what's going on with us, we'll say it's Jesus. We ask this in your name, Lord. Amen.

Scripture Reflection Questions: Read this week's scripture together and discuss the following (note: we use the same scripture reflection questions each week so that we can practice using the same tools over time as we examine different scriptures)

- What do we learn about God's story in this passage?
- What do we learn about our story in this passage?

Talk:

- When has Jesus met you in a place that needed real change, and what shifted as you walked with Him? Consider a time that Jesus helped you change in a real way: like becoming kinder, braver, calmer, or more honest.
- How did you know something was genuinely different (peace, freedom, direction, or healing)?
- Where are you still managing how you look instead of letting Jesus reshape you, and who might need to hear that Jesus makes people whole, not just "better behaved"?

Action Plan:

Review the action prompt below, share any initial ideas of how you might pursue this practice this week.

- Think of someone you know who you might choose to share your honesty with, not your polish. Then, in a normal moment (not forced), share one of the stories you've written in your journal with them. Not advice. Not a sermon. Just your story. This is non-performative evangelism. You are sharing what you've seen Jesus do.

Closing Group Prayer:

Spend a few minutes together in your group sharing prayer requests and then praying together for each other. Take the challenging parts of your conversation to Jesus. Thank God for the time together, the conversation shared, the other people in the group, and for encouragement for the week ahead.