

Sermon Title: What's New?

Date: 01-01-23

- **Happy new year everyone! This is pastor Ethan, and welcome to 2023. Today and next Sunday I'm doing a special two part mini-series called 'what's new?' Because as it turns out, IN CHRIST, there is MUCH that is new. So, thanks for joining with us, and we will jump in.**
- **SO- Any new year resolutions out there? Big things, big changes you want to accomplish in 2023?**
- **The impulse to seek change- to desire something NEW- is part of our human nature. Statistics show that in America people change jobs roughly every 4 years. Sometimes that's not by choice, of course, but we all can relate to the idea that if we can change something about our circumstance this will bring greater peace, satisfaction, and quality of life.**
- **A BIG reason for this, of course, is that our current circumstance can often be difficult! We may look at our life, our challenges, and cry out--- I NEED SOMETHING NEW!**
- **This human desire for NEWNESS, for healing, justice, RE-CREATION... this is answered by God throughout scripture- and most dramatically by the famous passage at the very end of scripture, in Revelation 21, when God proclaims that IN CHRIST he is making....**

✝ All things new

Revelations 21:3-5 *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God." ⁴ 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." ⁵ He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!"*

- **Hold that thought...**
- **Last Sunday was Christmas day, we only had our BC service, so most of you didn't hear that message- but I encourage you to go back and listen to it online, because we talked about the idea of a 'PROLEPSIS' – something that hasn't happened, but because we have absolute certainty that it WILL HAPPEN, we are able to live as if it has already happened. SPIRITUALLY- the concept of ALREADY and NOT YET.**
- **Think about our journey of spiritual maturity- increasingly coming to experience change and transformation in our SOUL- how we THINK, FEEL, and ACT. This is the process of BECOMING – in our lived experience- who we ALREADY ARE in our identity in Christ.**
- **And friends, one of the great NT hopes we tend to think is in the realm of the NOT YET- but that actually is ALREADY TRUE for the believer- is GOD's end-time proclamation that HE IS MAKING EVERYTHING NEW.**
- **YOU SEE, we don't just live in the hope of what WILL BE MADE NEW when Revelation 21 comes to pass... WE LIVE IN THE HOPE- the goodness- of what has ALREADY BEEN MADE NEW because of our FAITH PARTICIPATION in what Christ accomplished on the cross.**

New Years is a time we consider new things we would like to achieve.

This New Year, may we live in the good of the New Things, In Christ, we have already received.

- Lots could be said about each of these- but just going to touch on them- remind you of this beauty and power God has shown us in scripture, of the NEWNESS in which we now live... START IN the psalms, beautiful poem where David describes the miracle of change and transformation God did in his life- not only that, even though he wasn't aware of it, David's poem speaks prophetically to what is now possible through faith in Christ... that IN CHRIST, we have received...

✠ A new song

Psalms 40:1-3 *I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry. ² He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.*

³ *He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God.*

Many will see and fear the LORD and put their trust in him.

- A new song- this is the image of a new response from the core of our very being- and it's WORSHIP. Rather than looking at the world around us, the uncertainty around us, with fear and insecurity, we look at life through the lens of FAITH- the lens of the truth of God's presence, God's goodness, and it brings forth a song of hope, joy, and freedom- a song of worship.
- THIS YEAR, what is the NEW SONG?
- WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN a new song, because IN CHRIST we have received...

✠ A new life

- If we ask the NT "what is the greatest and most consistent way God is making ALL THINGS new, the answer is that through faith in Jesus Christ, we have received a NEW LIFE. As a pastor over the years my two greatest passions of biblical teaching are the miracles of our IDENTITY in Christ and NEW LIFE in Christ.

- One of the most in-depth proclamations of this new life is in Romans 6, where Paul compares our new life to the resurrection life of Jesus.

Romans 6:4-14 *We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*

- As I continue to read, listen for the results of this new life- what is now TRUE OF US in Christ.

⁵ *For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— ⁷ because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.*

⁸ *Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. ¹⁰ The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.*

¹¹ *In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. ¹³ Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.*

- This new year, what will it mean that YOU TOO may live a new life?

- **Not only have WE- individual believers- been given a new life, BECAUSE this is true, we are now part of a...**

✠ A new creation

2 Corinthians 5:17-18 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!* ¹⁸ *All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation...*

- **I grew up learning this verse to day “If anyone is In Christ, HE is a new creation. Actually, there is no gender in the verse at all- the NASB says “THIS PERSON is a new creation.” But even this is an addition to the text- the literal Greek says... “If anyone is in Christ... NEW CREATION.”**
- **Of course includes us as individual believers, but the sense of the text is bigger-**
- **If Rev 21 describes the future when ALL THINGS will be made new, here Paul proclaims that IN CHRIST, we have become part of God’s NEW CREATION work- We are a fully functional model of that New Creation, RIGHT NOW- in our own lives and as the COMMUNITY of faith.**
- **This is humbling thought! The NT picture of the church is that when somebody looks at US- how we think, how we live, our integrity, our love, how we related to each other- they are seeing a PREVIEW of the New Creation that is to come. WE FAIL AT THIS- terribly at times- but the Spirit’s work within us- God’s design and intention for the community of faith- is that this is who we are.**
- **In Galatians 6 Paul sums this up...**

Galatians 6:15 *Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision (external religion) means anything; what counts is the new creation*

- **SO, in 2023, what does it mean that in your life, and your relationship with other believers, that God’s new creation has come?**
- **NEXT- as new creations, this means we are part of God’s work to bring about a...**

✠ A new humanity

Ephesians 2:14-16 *For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one (Jews and Gentiles) and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵ by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations.*

- **Don’t miss this! What did Paul just say was the source of the barrier, the hostility, between Jews and Gentiles?**
- **THE LAW. What the law represents here is the idea that we can be right with God, we can be good and worthy of God’s acceptance, ON OUR OWN.**
- **This approach almost always has one of two outcomes. This first is burnout. Guilt. Shame. Disillusionment and even despair, as we realize that we CAN’T BE GOOD on our own. We will never be worthy of God’s acceptance on our own. That we DON’T have all the answers, we are not able to make life work- and all of our philosophical or moral principles have NO ability to bring about real hope and change in our lives!**
- **This is what Paul describes in Romans 7. But here’s the thing- as painful as this realization can be- and it can be crushing- it actually is the doorway to freedom, when we finally come to the end of ourselves and surrender to the grace and mercy of Jesus.**

- **The other outcome is much more insidious- it happens when we think we ARE successful on our own, that we DO have it figured out, that we are worthy of acceptance on our own- because this leads to PRIDE.**
- **IT is PRIDE- especially religious and spiritual pride- that leads us to look at others with judgment. For our disposition toward someone to be how we think they are wrong- what needs to change about them to be acceptable to God and to us.**
- **Through Paul, God said “NO!”- Jews, you look to your religion and morality, Gentiles, you look to your wisdom and philosophy, but for BOTH OF YOU, for ALL OF US, our only hope to be right with God, to NOT be condemned to making life work on our own, IS CHRIST. AND IN CHRIST, the dividing wall of performance based acceptance is TORN DOWN, and in its place God is building a NEW HUMANITY.**

His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

- **CHURCH! As we look at all the division present in the year before us, what will it look like that WE- as DISCIPLES OF JESUS, have been given a NEW WAY TO BE HUMAN- brought into God’s new humanity?**
- **And now we get practical... as New creations with a New life and part of God’s New Humanity, we have received...**

† A new self with a new attitude

Ephesians 4:22-24 *You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³ to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

- **We will look into this closely when we get to Colossians 3, but the image here is of us ALREADY possessing a new self, and being told by God that we have a choice- moment by moment, to actually PUT ON this new self. To set our mind, set our hearts on who we TRULY ARE in our union with Christ, and let this be the source of how we actually live.**

Colossians 3:9-11 *Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. ¹¹ Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.*

(Galatians 3:28 adds ‘male nor female, all one in Christ Jesus)

- **This gets practical! This new year, what will it look like for you to put on our new self, to be made new in our attitude, how we THINK, FEEL, and ACT?**
- **Just touch on these remaining... IN CHRIST, we HAVE RECEIVED...**

† A new birth into a living hope

1 Peter 1:3-4 *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.*

- **Our hope is the hope of Resurrection. HOPE OF NEW CREATION. Our hope is ALIVE, LIVING, and it is the transforming presence and goodness of Christ in us, which we know and experience through our relationship with Christ- by FAITH.**
- **And IN OUR relationship with Jesus, we have been given..**

✠ A new command

John 13:34-35 *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

- **This year, with all the decisions, opportunities, and challenges we will face, may always ask- IN THIS SITUATION, what does it look like for me to LOVE.**
- **And church, we are ABLE to truly love as Christ has loved us, because we have received...**

✠ The new way of the Spirit

Romans 7:5-6 *For when we were in the realm of the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death. ⁶ But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.*

- **We now live by the motivation and empowerment of Christ’s very life within us- present by His Spirit within us.**
- **You may say “I just can love like Jesus loved”... and you would be right. Only Jesus can love as Jesus loves- so instead of us trying to love out of sheer obedience or obligation, Jesus says- LOOK TO ME! Come to KNOW ME. Surrender to ME- and I’ll give you the power, step by step, to love as I love. Not because you HAVE TO, but because my Spirit and nature will lead you to WANT TO... as a natural fruit of who you are in relationship to me.**
- **Church- to come full circle, both Jesus himself and the writers of the NT describe this NEW WAY of the Spirit as the NEW COVENANT. The whole NEW WAY to know God made possible through Christ’s death and resurrection. IN CHRIST, we have been given...**

✠ A new covenant

2 Corinthians 3:6 *He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter (**not of obligation**) but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*

Hebrews 8:7-13

For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another.

⁸ *But God found fault with the people and said: “The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. ⁹ It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord. ¹⁰ This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord.*

I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts.

I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. ¹² For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” ¹³ By calling this covenant “new,” he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear.

Hebrews 7:18 *The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless ¹⁹ (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.*

- **Church- the better hope that has been introduced is the gift of faith in Jesus Christ. The BETTER HOPE that I.C.**
 - **We have a new song**
 - **We have been given a new life**
 - **We are a New Creation, as disciples of Jesus we are a fully functioning preview of God's completed work of New Creation life**
 - **We have been made part of a new humanity**
 - **Because we have a new life, a new self, we can choose to have a new attitude in life, where we continually chose to live in the good of all that is New**
 - **We have been given new birth into a living hope**
 - **We have a new command- to love**
 - **We have received a new source of life- the NEW WAY of the Spirit**
 - **And in all these things, we live in the miracle of the NEW COVENANT, by which we are set free from legalism and performance, and have the better hope of drawing near to God.**

- **THIS NEW YEAR, what will this look like for you? For me? For our church? The spirit knows that answer. As we trust- as our hearts are open to listen and learn- the spirit will lead us into that answer- and whatever it may be, it is GOOD.**