

New Beginnings

talk about new year resolutions

people want to come to church but they think they are not worthy, or not good enough

PRAY

Jeremiah 18:1-6 (NKJV)

18 The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying: 2 “Arise and go down to the potter’s house, and there I will cause you to hear My words.” 3 Then I went down to the potter’s house, and there he was, making something at the wheel. 4 And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to make.

5 Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying: 6 “O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?” says the Lord. “Look, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel!

It is cool to think of the ways that God communicates with His people. He often speaks in images that people can relate to so that they can better understand what He is trying to say.

Isn't it great that we have a God that reaches out to us and communicates on our level so that we can understand Him?

How many of you have had times where God has shown you something miraculous through some very simple image or story?

You may have heard me share in one of my first sermons here about how I was driving and I looked to my left over a field, it was bright, yet the picture I was seeing was so clear. It seemed like I could see for miles and miles. I saw with a level of clarity that I had not seen before and haven't since.

Think about watching old school antenna tv that is kind of fuzzy and then compare that to HDTV today. Or if you are a glasses or contacts wearer with pretty degraded vision, think about seeing without your glasses or contacts vs seeing with them.

This is the way I saw the beauty of God's creation that day. It was like SUPER HD or something. I was almost mesmerized by this view I had. I don't know how long I stared out that window in amazement but thank God I stayed on the road and didn't hit anything!

What God was showing me something through this simple vision. I Could see a great distance and with great clarity. God was showing me how my spiritual vision can be when I seek Him first! You can see more than you ever have, you can see things with a level of clarity that you didn't know existed!

God has more to show you. Seek vision and direction from the Lord. He wants to give you greater spiritual clarity.

In John chapter 16 Jesus is speaking to the disciples just before His betrayal, arrest, and crucifixion. Jesus tells the disciples what to expect when He goes away, and says

John 16:12 (NKJV)

"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. You may not have received clarity from God because you are not ready like the disciples weren't. But you also may not have it because you don't ask for it!

So that was kind of a tangent but you need to be able to see clearly in the Spirit to be able to understand the things of God. I can explain things to you all day long but the Holy Spirit is the One that brings understanding, He gives you revelation!

Here in Jeremiah chapter 18, Jeremiah is a prophet of the Lord who is discouraged and about to give up on God's people. He probably felt like you have felt at some point about yourself (or someone else), God has done all He can and there is no longer any hope for me.

The people of Israel were beyond salvaging in the eyes of Jeremiah. How many of you have thought that you were beyond hope at some point? Maybe you do right now....

I'm here today to tell you that our God is a God of new beginnings! It doesn't matter if you have failed time and time again. It doesn't matter if you've tried to serve God and keep falling short of your goals. God will remold you into what He created you to be!

But Jeremiah has this hopeless feeling for Israel. So God has him go observe the potter and how he works with the clay.

Now first, if you've never seen clay on a potter's wheel....it starts as just a lump of clay. The potter adds water to the lump and things start to get messy as the potter begins to work with the clay.

The potter then skillfully forms the clay into something beautiful. If the clay becomes messed up in the process, the potter smashes it back into a big, wet lump again, but then begins the process of molding the lump into something beautiful once again.

So as Jeremiah watches the potter, he sees the potter at the wheel completely focused, giving

all of his attention to his creation. The potter shapes the vessel and right about the time that it appeared to be taking shape, looking like a beautiful masterpiece, the vessel was unexpectedly ruined, it didn't develop correctly.

The word used is actually marred. Now I don't know about you but if I hear that something is marred, it sounds REALLY messed up....

Marred means disfigured, less useful, less attractive.

Some kind of unexpected flaw appeared disfiguring the beautiful creation. This flaw could not be easily repaired. The potter couldn't just patch it or cover up the flaw. If he had, the flaw would only resurface. The vessel would have to be remade.

So he made it again into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to make. See a potter makes beautiful creations out of clay. But if the vessel becomes misshapen, the potter does not throw out the clay. He does not discard it but he reshapes it back into a good vessel.

God tells Jeremiah that this is what He will do with Israel if there is repentance. Let's apply this to you and to me today.

God says "Can I not do with you as this potter?"

As the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in God's hands. We as people mess things up. We take what God has created to be a beautiful vessel and we ruin it, we disfigure it making it unusable.

But God just as the potter with clay, was completely focused and intentional in creating YOU! You have value in His eyes. He desires to use you even if you have become marred. That's right, really messed up. He wants to reshape you into His beautiful masterpiece. Jesus offers us a new beginning!

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

If you are in Christ, if you choose Him, you are remade! Just like the marred vessel, you are reshaped and molded into a new creation. You get a fresh start!

Too often I see people get this new beginning only to continue to walk with their head down ashamed of their past.

Can I tell you something? Your past, no matter how rotten it is, when God gets ahold of you and radically transforms your life, your past should now become your greatest tool. It's your testimony!

Revelation 12:11 (NKJV)

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.

The testimony of the saints will overcome the enemy! Because it is your proof that you have overcome your past by the power of Christ. You are not who you were, you are a NEW creation!

What we see many times is a new believer acts like they just got out of prison for their crimes (their past) but now they walk around ashamed. They may be forgiven by those they have wronged, they might be free, no longer bound, but their are still going to a support group stating things like "My name is Bob and I'm an addict"

Believers do this same thing. They get saved or have a powerful time with the Lord where they are freed but they still walk around ashamed of their past. Many times because of how the world views them, because the world reminds them of their past day after day after day.

That is the devil! The world reminding you of your past and trying to drag you back down instead of lift you up and encourage you!

When you are a new creation it is as if you are just created, brand new, unused, unworn. That is the kind of spiritual transformation you get in this new life, not some patch job!

Don't buy into the lies of the devil. This is for you! Your past does not define you if you are in Christ! His present is what defines you. He is victorious, therefore you are victorious!

The reality is more like Jesus putting you into a witness protection program. You get a new identity. You are no longer Bob the addict. You are now a blood washed saint. You have a fresh new start. You don't forget about your past but you sure don't worry about it either!

This is made possible because of Jesus' death and resurrection. Our identification with Him, by faith, make this new creation possible.

But not only do you get a fresh start as a new creation, 2 Corinthians says old things have passed away! You know what it means by old things? Everything that has been since the beginning.....that's right....everything you have done, everything you are ashamed of or regret from your past, they have all passed away.

That means that if today, you choose to follow Christ by allowing God to shape your life by His skilled, purposeful, and loving hands, everything you have done, all the ways you have marred God's beautiful vessel will be omitted.

Every flaw, erased as if it never happened. The original YOU perishes, and now you are something new!

When we are made new, our old values, priorities, beliefs, loves, and plans are gone. We see with a new perspective. Now this doesn't mean that evil and sin no longer exist and won't rear their ugly heads in our lives, but it does mean that they are no longer in control in your life.

Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Everything, all things, become new. This means they begin to be new. Now you have a new spiritual perception that begins to produce good works!

Ephesians 2:10 (NKJV)

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

You are not who you once were. You remember that when your past is brought back to remembrance. Old things have passed away, all things have become new.

Ephesians 2:1-3 (NKJV)

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

We all walked according to this world. We **were** all sons and daughters of disobedience. We all lived according to the lusts and desires of our flesh. But we are in the hands of God, the potter. He takes our marred vessels that are unrepairable, and He doesn't just throw us out as though we are no good and not of use....He reshapes us and behold, he makes us new!

Ephesians 2:4-10

4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

WOW, what a good, good, God we serve....amen?

God, rich in mercy, doesn't give us the punishment we deserve because of His great love! Instead, He made us alive, new, born again, through faith in Jesus.

We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for GOOD works! Now how people can accept God's mercy, grace, and love but continue in their sinful ways thinking it's ok just blows my mind. Are you kidding me?

You are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for GOOD works!

ASK JASON TO COME

Just reading Ephesians 2:1-10, it's very clear. You are only saved by grace, through faith in Jesus. And the evidence of this salvation is that you no longer conduct yourself by the lusts of the flesh but by the good works in Christ that God prepared for you to WALK in.

It's all about Jesus. If you understand His love for you.....if you understand His sacrifice for you....you will live your life for Him!

Jesus offers you new beginning. New beginnings start with faith. This new creation that God reshapes us into...it all starts with faith in Jesus Christ.

If you need this kind of new beginning, or maybe you need a fresh start in another aspect of your life. It all starts with faith.

This doesn't only apply to salvation. Maybe you are saved, reflect on all areas of your life. Have you given them over to God?

Does your situation seem impossible? Does it seem like God has done all that He can and there is no longer any hope? Remember that is the place Jeremiah was in with the people of Israel.

How much more powerful is God almighty than the potter in this story. Think of the power that a potter has over clay. A substance that he can shape and mold however he wants to. It's merely a solid matter that God created, the potter only molds and shapes.

God created everything. He has the power and authority to do anything. But it starts with faith, believing in those things that you don't see and declaring them as if they were so!