

Beaverton Foursquare
Sunday A.M. 1/15/17
Transformed part 1
Pastor Randy Remington

Transformed: Eternal Life

Introduction

New Years resolutions? According to Google the top three are:

1. Improve one's physical health
2. Get organized
3. Live life to the fullest

These reflect people's desire to change

How many would like to say this? "I'm more like Jesus in January of 2018 than January 2017."

That takes *transformation*, something God is committed to in our lives—Spiritual transformation

As we follow Jesus—spending time with him and doing the things that please him—we change to be more like Jesus.

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. 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."
(Romans 12:1-2)

These two verses from Romans 12 will form the theme for the series.

Transformation = Metamórfosi (Greek)

It alludes to a change in appearance, form and character. We see it best illustrated when this word is used of Jesus when he transfigures on the Mount (Matthew 17:1–8, Mark 9:2–8, Luke 9:28–36 describe it. 2 Peter 1:16–18 refers to it.)

The word is used in the passive voice, which means that it is something God does in me and for me, but how do I posture myself toward God? How do I embrace his work in me?

Main Text:

“Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.” Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.” “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!” Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.” “How can this be?” Nicodemus asked. “You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things? Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.” For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have

eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.” (John 3:1-17)

(v2) *“He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.”*

Nicodemus was a man of prestige and power. He came at night and John, who weaves the theme of light and dark throughout his gospel, includes that detail without explanation. But it is significant. Maybe he doesn't want to be seen meeting Jesus.

Sign = *“A significant display of power that points beyond itself to a deeper reality that can only be perceived/seen through the eyes of faith.” (DA Carson, Pillar NT Commentary)*

Jesus' signs in John, his miracles, always point to something bigger, beyond the obvious.

(v3) *“Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”*

Jesus is gently putting pressure on Nicodemus. Pointing out the essential work that God still needs to do, even in those who are Israel's leaders and teachers. In this verse, Jesus coins the term “born again” or “born from above”.

True life has to come down from heaven.

(v4) *“How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!”*

Nicodemus may be a little snarky here. He states the obvious in a sarcastic way. Nicodemus is trapped in thinking only about what is humanly possible.

(v5-8) *“Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”*

v3

**Very truly I tell you
no one can see
the kingdom of God
unless
they are born again**

v5

**Very truly I tell you
no one can *enter*
the kingdom of God
unless
they are born of water
and the Spirit**

Jesus words would have reminded a learned teacher of the law, like Nicodemus, of God’s promises. One of which is very likely to have leapt to his mind:

“I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God. I will save you from all your uncleanness...”
(Ezekiel 36:25-29)

God’s End Game: People cleansed by him and given *new life*
The life of the flesh can only give rise to new life of the flesh
God’s Spirit must intervene to impart *new life*, his life

The evidence of this change in our life is the outworking of it, in how we live our daily lives. People begin to see that you're different. You've passed from death to life, from darkness to light.

(v9) *"How can this be?" Nicodemus asked."*

Nicodemus is still bound by the limitations of flesh, focused on what's humanly possible.

This is important because whatever we try to create in the flesh tends to destroy us (like Frankenstein). We can only receive form God; we cannot compete as creators.

(v14-15) *"Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up. That everyone who believes may have eternal life in him."*

Again, this seemingly random statement would have surely reminded Nicodemus of God's deliverance in Numbers:

"They traveled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea, to go around Edom. But the people grew impatient on the way; they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!" Then the LORD sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, "We sinned when we spoke against the LORD and against you. Pray that the LORD will take the snakes away from us." So Moses prayed for the people. The LORD said to Moses, "Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live." So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, they lived." (Numbers 21:4-9)

The problem: We got bit by a snake (in the Garden) and now there's a venom running through the veins of all humanity (sinful rebellion, self-love, antipathy toward God), but all we have to do is look at one lifted up on a pole (Christ on the Cross) and we will live.

Our impulse is to try and clean up our act and THEN come to God.

God says, "Look and live."

How would God fulfill his promise? He would send his Son, Jesus. Why? Because he loved all who were lost. "For God so loved the world..." (John 3:16)

Application

When we stand before Jesus, it won't be about what we've done—or about what everyone else has said about Jesus. There's only one question: have you looked upon the Savior and trusted him? That is how life comes into us.

"...that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." (Romans 10:9)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" (2 Corinthians 5:17)

"He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds." (John 19:39)

This man, Nicodemus, who struggled so much with Jesus and what he said in chapter 3, somewhere along the way trusted Jesus and was changed. The man who would only come to a popular Jesus at night, boldly came by day to retrieve the broken body of his Lord by day.

Discussion Questions

- 1) In the introduction on page one Randy asked us not only about New Year's Resolutions, but about our desire to change...to be transformed. The change we're talking about is to be more like Jesus, but as pointed out that takes transformation. What are your initial thoughts as we begin to look at "transformation"?
- 2) The awesome thing is that God is committed to this transformation in our lives. As you re-read Romans 12:1-2 what is God asking us to do to embrace and open up for this transformation process to happen in us?
- 3) What did you see as you read the definition of "transformation" in the original language? Also the use of this word in the passive voice on the top of page 2 of your notes?
- 4) On page 3 of your notes, discuss John's use of the word "sign/s" in his letter. This is important to understand that signs are more than just miracles for miracles sake, there is something much deeper going on. Discuss your past views on this and what you're seeing now.
- 5) On page 4 of your notes Pastor Randy parallels verses 3 and 5. Both verses are very similar, verse 3 Jesus blows Nicodemus out of the water telling him he must be "born again". Jesus is also very merciful to Nicodemus as he ties this concept together in verse 5 to something Nicodemus would understand. As you re-read the Ezekiel 36 passage what was Jesus showing him about "God's end game"?
- 6) Verses 14 and 15 appear to be a random statement about a snake on a pole. Take a peek on pages 5 and 6 and share what these verses tell you now, in light of the "snake venom" that we were born with and God's solution to this fatal condition.