

Personal Transformation (The Goodness Of God Within Us)

Series: Making All Things New

Brad Bailey – Sept. 10, 2023

Intro...

Today... we are going to begin a short 3 weeks series entitled “Making All Things New”

This is the declaration that Jesus makes. The disciple John, who was the closest disciple and friend of Jesus... records what he heard in a vision... as Jesus...declares:

“Behold, I am making all things new.”- Revelations 21:5

It's important to hear those words afresh.

They speak of something so much bigger than what we tend to be holding in our thoughts when it comes to what God is doing.

We tend to connect our minds to the immediate and smaller meaning of things...

We think ... if I can just get to the coffee...

We can think of God as just adding some enhancements to life... or being a source of momentary inspiration.

It's not that God doesn't care about every small moment... but what is ultimately at hand is nothing less than making all things new.

Or maybe we are drawn to political visions like: Build Back Better... Make America Great again.

What's ultimately at hand is nothing less than making all things new.

As we begin this Fall season... I can't think of anything more valuable than to grasp afresh the big picture... to step back and see the big picture

The kingdom which Jesus declares and demonstrates...is nothing less than the restoration of all things...the whole order of things.

And we can expand on that by recognizing that God is restoring His goodness in us....among us...and around us.

Restoring Identity In God (The Goodness Of God Within Us)

Restoring Community In God (The Goodness Of God Among Us)

Restoring The World In God (The Goodness Of God Around Us)

Over these 3 weeks we are going to simply refresh our minds with what God is ultimately doing...

What God is ultimately doing... that we are a part of... is nothing less than becoming new people... creating a new community... and ultimately a new world.

> The transformation of all things... begins with personal transformation... with the Goodness Of God Within Us.

We tend to focus on how the world needs to change. We tend to think the problem is simply that there are bad people... and that we can simply divide the world between good and bad people.

But Jesus says the problem is that we have all gone astray. Some may be overtly rebellious...and some may be more self-righteous. But the problem is that we are all operating separated from the ultimate source of all good...which is God.

So not surprisingly Jesus explains how transformation begins with the process of coming home.

Luke 15:11-24

Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. ¹³ "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. ¹⁷ "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. ²¹ "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' ²² "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

The religious leaders don't understand why Jesus is welcoming those they had separated out as sinner...as bad people.

And in response...he tells this parable...and it describes how we have left home... gone to a distant country... where we will be exploited... and lose our dignity and potentially our life.

But what God was doing...is welcoming those who come to their senses... repent... and return home.

All of heaven rejoices over every individual life who comes home.

For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' - Luke 15: 24

*The son had **taken the goods** and left the giver.*

*He **declared his autonomy**... and went off to create his own life.*

At the center of this story...is the loss of identity. ...ends with the restoration of that true identity. my son and my daughter

Lost...but now is found

At the center is the question

Whose you are?

Our identity is not found in ourselves...in declaring our own autonomy...

*We may be individuals... but we are **not the source of our most fundamental identity.***

"I'm my own person"... can be a reasonable statement of individuating...but the real question is who are you?...and it can't be answered by ourselves.

And so often when we think we are simply our own persons...we really are just trying to be what we think others will value. In this case he runs out of goods...and "hired himself out to a citizen of that country." Jesus know...this world will exploit you.

*The son who claimed his autonomy... ventures out and finds himself **exploited by those whose affirmation he tried to gain.** When the goods were gone... he was faced he had lost all dignity.*

But the beginning of all transformation is when he comes to his senses...and realizes that even the humble servant had everything they needed back in his Father's house.

> I am not some autonomous life...nor can I be defined by other creatures... what I need is what I have back in the Father's home and heart.

This represents what Jesus refers to as repentance.' It is not about being sorry for the past. It is about thinking differently and changing the direction of our lives for the future. Repentance

involves a **change of orientation**, direction, or character that is so pronounced and dramatic that **the very form and purpose of a life is decisively altered and reshaped**. It means to begin the journey of walking away from the old to the new.

*He cannot be a slave...because he is a son.
He is **no longer the exploited** ...but the beloved.*

*The one who claimed... "I am my own person"... embraces their true and eternal identity... that **"I am the beloved of God"***

*This is what Jesus has come to do... Jesus is the beloved son of God... the fully image bearing son... he who lives in the love of the Father... is **offering that unending relationship to all who will receive him.***

The power of change is rooted in our ability to accept at the depth of our souls...

I am loved.

I am a beloved child of God.

All transformation is rooted in love [1]

We love because he first loved us. - John 4:19

That is not Hallmark card sentimentality... it is the substance of true spirituality.

We might want to go searching for deeper truths... but there is no deeper truth.

And it is from this love that God changes us. It is from this love that God begins to do a work of transformation. [2]

How? Through his indwelling Spirit.

The Holy Spirit comes and indwells all who have received Christ... and it continues that truth within us.

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. – Romans 8:16

The Spirit of God interacts with our spirit... because we are spiritual beings. There is that which transcends our material nature.

And the Spirit testifies...that is affirms ...that we are God's children.

This working of the Spirit is the fulfillment of what God has spoken of through the prophets.

Through the prophet Ezekiel God foretold [3]...

"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." - Ezekiel 36:26

Notice that what God is doing to make all things new...is not giving us new rules... but new hearts... responsive hearts.

And this is what the Apostle Paul describes when he writes in the Biblical book of Galatians:

Galatians 5:22-23, 25

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Our personal growth is described through the work of the Spirit within us.

This is how the goodness of God develops IN us.

*And Paul uses the **metaphor of fruit...** of **botanical growth.** [4]*

And it's helpful to note a few things about our personal transformation.

God's goodness brings a change that is...

Gradual - Christian change is **as gradual as flower or fruit...you can never see it.**

We will see it over time... the way we say to a young life...I think you've grown... but we don't actually see the growth happen.

And there may be seasons where we see more emerge... but many seasons like winter we see very little.

This can be really significant to embrace. Because we live amidst the stories of superheroes...who discover superpowers...and we may naturally want that kind of heroic power. If I bitten by a spider I can become Spiderman. If I discover I have come from another planet I may be Superman. But I am more than all that...I am created by God in His image... living in a world long separated from Him... but gradually gaining my true identity as I become more like him.

Inevitable – If you have the Spirit of God in you... you WILL become different

One man (T. Keller refers to G Cambell Morgan) saw a grave in Italy...in which the massive thousand pound slab had a tree that had grown up right through it. Because a small eggcorn had gotten in the graves dirt...over time it grew...and split the slab. Although it may have seemed too small to notice...it's growth was inevitable.

Inner Level

The fruit described here... is not the same as basic skills ... or social skills. If we actively get involved serving others... God may use our natural skills... or a charismatic personality...but it is not the same as the inner level growth that reflects the unique nature of God growing.

This fruit is rooted in love. Some have noted that the grammar here could imply something like a semicolon after love...meaning that the fruit of the spirit is love... manifested in the various qualities that follow.

And such love... such qualities... transcend our natural gifts and skills.

CLOSING

What is so important to grasp... is that

God is not simply calling us to go change the world... with His goodness... apart from being changed by His goodness. [5]

As the popular idea is often stated...“Be the change we want to see.”

As the church we represent the beginning of God making all things new...when the Spirit of God begins to change us.

It involves the process of returning and being rooted in the Father's love... and then welcoming His Spirit to change us... to change our pride...our contempt...our greed ... and our lust ...to change all that tries in vain to use other people and things to find our worth...rather than God who created us in His image.

So the challenge today is this...

Embrace the truth that the transformation of all things... begins with personal transformation... with the Goodness Of God Within Us.

Don't turn your gaze away from God's love.

Notes:

1. The more complete text adds even further to the significance and centrality of love.

John 4:10-19 (NirV)

¹⁰ Here is what love is. It is not that we loved God. It is that he loved us and sent his Son to give his life to pay for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God loved us this much, we should also love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God. But if we love one another, God lives in us. His love is made complete in us.

¹³ Here's how we know that we are joined to him and he to us. He has given us his Holy Spirit. ¹⁴ The Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. We have seen it and are witnesses to it. ¹⁵ God lives in anyone who agrees that Jesus is the Son of God. This kind of person remains joined to God. ¹⁶ So we know that God loves us. We depend on it.

God is love.

Anyone who leads a life of love is joined to God. And God is joined to them. ¹⁷ Suppose love is fulfilled among us. Then we can be without fear on the day God judges the world. **Love is fulfilled among us when in this world we are like Jesus.** ¹⁸ There is no fear in love. Instead, perfect love drives away fear. That's because fear has to do with being punished. The one who fears does not have perfect love.

¹⁹ We love because he loved us first.

2. We do well to also remember how Jesus spoke of abiding in him...

Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine.

Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me... I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit." - John 15:4-5

3. Similarly:

Ezekiel 11:19

And I will give them one heart, and ^xa new spirit I will put within them. ^yI will remove the heart of stone from their flesh ^zand give them a heart of flesh,

Jeremiah 31:33

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: ^sI will put my law within them, and I will write it ^ton their hearts. ^uAnd I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Hebrews 8:10

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord:

I will put my laws into their minds,

and ⁱwrite them on their hearts,

and I will be their God,

and they shall be my people.

You must remain in me... abide in me and I will...

And from this God's Spirit... Roman's testifies... and transforms

4. Drew from— Timothy Keller Sermon "How to Change" (Aug 10, 2015)

5. One might be inspired by the initial calling that Jesus presented to Peter... "to become a fisher of men"... but he then spent 3 years working on changing Peter...and then continued by his indwelling Spirit.