**RESET**

**RESETTING OUR LIVES FOR GOD’S NEW MERCIES**

**4/23/2017**

**I. Introduction**

A. It is Springtime! What a lovely time of the year; everywhere we look things are coming alive, new things are being born. Where we live the pecan trees are beginning their bloom and a journey to a new harvest. Across the road new horses are being born at the horse farm. I love it because I’m reminded that for a Christian, it is always spring time in our hearts. All of God’s promises are like the seeds that as we plant and water with our faith, we can expect to spring up in new blessings on our life.

* *They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength and rise with wings like an eagle.*
* *All things are working together for good to those who love God.*
* *He will restore the years the locusts have eaten.*
* *As you give it shall be given to you pressed down, shaken together running over.*
* *Your health will spring forth speedily; your light will shine.*

As I said last Sunday, these mercies are kind of like the 90 Easter eggs we hid everywhere for our grandkids last week. God’s mercies are everywhere; we just have to open our eyes to see them.

B. But Springtime means something else around our house - Projects… spring cleaning, planting, and weeding, painting and cleaning. As it relates to this new series, this is a time to be reminded that we are God’s project.

***Ephesians 2:10, NJB***

*“We are God’s work of art, created in Christ Jesus for the good works which God has already designated to make up our way of life.”*

**Our theme verse for this message is:**

**Ephesians 4:22-24 NKJV**

***“...that you put off concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”***

What these verses say is that we are all God’s project and He is at work in us to renew, renovate, reconstruct our life from the inside out. If you notice that word “renew”, it is (Ananeou). It means a complete, an extreme makeover, a total renovation of the heart. It’s a spiritual replacement of every board, pipe, brick, the result being a hundred times better than “Chip and Joanna” could ever do with a house. It means to reverse the effects of emotional, mental, and spiritual deterioration and corruption that eats away like rust over time, so that you can move towards the original pristine condition of the person you were created to be- created in the image of God before the beginning of time.

This is the most important thing happening in your life right now. Can you tell someone, “You’re God’s project and you’ve still got a way to go”. You can tell them, “I sure do but not as much as you!”

These verses tell us that there are three things in particular that God is trying to renovate or reset in you: **your thoughts, your attitudes, and your habits.**

C. The reason why this is so important is because every beautiful thing God wants to do on the outside of your life will be the direct result of what you let God do on the inside of your heart.

**Proverbs 4:23 NKJV**

*“Keep your heart with all diligence for out of it springs the issues of life.”*

What this is saying: All of the things we experience on the outside that we want: happy relationships, meaningful careers, financial stability, great marriages, joyful and free lives…are the fruits but the heart- our thoughts, attitudes, and habits are the roots.

What happens in our heart eventually shows up everywhere: in our conversations, our relationships, even on our face. Here’s a story about Abraham Lincoln who was looking to hire someone for a government position. Lincoln told his assistant he didn’t like that man’s face. The assistant said, “You can’t blame a person for the kind of face they have”. He said, “O yes, after you’re 40, your face tells the world the attitudes you’ve chosen to have up to that point.”

Everything that is going to happen for us, with us, and through us, as Christians starts with what we let God do in us. Of course, the first most important thing is that when we let Christ come into our life we get saved, but then the second most important thing is how we day by day allow God to reset our heart.

We saw this last week with the disciples. They saw the resurrection but before they became the apostles that turned the world upside down, a resurrection- a “resetting” had to happen in them. Before Peter preached a world changing message, there was 50 days of an extreme makeover of the heart, where Jesus restored and reset his heart. As we said last week, God makes us right then He makes things well and uses and blesses us so we can change the world.

**II. So how do we know how and where God wants to work to reset our heart?** Though we don’t like to hear this, the fact is that it is so often when we encounter points of pain. C.S. Lewis spoke about how pain is “God’s megaphone to awaken a sleeping world, whispers in our pleasure and shouts in our pain”. While Peter felt the pain of his failure, Jesus was revealing how He wanted to move Peter’s trust from himself, his pride, and self-dependency over to complete dependency on Christ.

Sometimes God has to allow our pain to get bigger than our pride or our denial. I

noticed one of my drawers got too full with old clothes, but I was too lazy to organize it. It wasn’t until I couldn’t close it, that I finally succumbed to resetting it. It’s like my experience trying to put one of my grandsons into his car seat. It needed a lot of readjusting but I was determined to make it work. After struggling and struggling my little grandson said, “Papa, is not working.” It is human nature to just want to manage our dysfunction, manage and bury our anger, bad reactions, sinful habits, and attitudes than to really face them and let God do the heart work necessary to change. I like the verse in Hebrews 12:12 where it is talking about how God, as a good Father disciplines His children and gently exposes things that He wants to correct and reset in our lives.

**Hebrews 12:12**

*“Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.”*

I’ve shared how one of the most difficult days in my recovery from my broken bones was, when in August after 5 months of recovery (I had been told that I would recover in 3-4 months) I went to get a second opinion and was told after he looked at the x-rays, that I wasn’t going to heal without a second surgery. I didn’t want to hear that, but in retrospect what seemed like the worst day in my recovery was really one of the best days. It is because of the second surgery that I can walk today without a cane… The same in my marriage.

In fact, I think what I’ve learned about success and victory in any area in life, it never comes without failure and struggle. It comes through failure and struggle. It’s not because we do everything right and we’re set but because we do almost everything wrong, but each time we’re willing to reset, restart, rewrite the story of God’s work more intelligently. (The famous Michael Jordan commercial… One of my favorite stories about Thomas Edison, how we had to restart/replant this church 3 times… grew down to 3 people…)

There is a message in this as to what God wants to do in your life where there is an area of pain. In John 15:3, we learn that the very secret to bearing much fruit, is being pruned. All of us, if there is a picture I want us to see when it comes to this process we call “reset” is that like a tree; we have some branches that are really fruitful and all of us have some branches, areas of our life where we are not bearing fruit. In some cases, the branches are dying. In some other cases they might not be dying but they are yet to produce the kind of fruit… righteousness, impact, and joy we know God wants for us. I want us to see these areas of set back as perfect opportunities for a reset.

I can tell you that where you are probably hurting the most is the very place God is most at work, if we will respond and say “yes”. It is in that very place we are going to see our “groans turn into growth”, our failure into fertilizer, our embarrassment in character, our pain into a pathway of promise. It sure was the case with Peter, who after being the one who failed the most was the one God used the most.

One of the things we like to say around here is “revealing is the first step to healing.” One of the reasons we have small groups is that if we can actually take a first step by admitting to others there is an area that we believe God wants to reset our heart. I love to remind people that God’s ability to bring you back is 1000 times more powerful than Satan’s ability to mess you up. The Bible says, where sin abounds, grace overwhelms.

**III. So how does God reset our hearts and lives?** He does this by replacing the thoughts, attitudes, and habits of our old self with the thoughts, attitudes, and habits of our new self.

**Some keys to this:**

A. Realizing that the new person we are longing to become is the real person we already are in Christ. We are not our old self trying to get better; we are a completely new self with a new nature free to put off the old self with all of its “stinkin thinkin”, bad attitudes, and old habits.

1. I like to think of our life as a store or company under new management; Jesus is our new boss. There were all kinds of old employees; old thoughts and attitudes … “You are so unworthy, you just can’t overcome that struggle, that’s a person you hate and can’t forgive, your life is hopeless…”. Under our new boss, we have the right, to do like in that show “The Apprentice” and say to the old thoughts and attitudes: “You’re fired, consider yourself unemployed”. “You are being replaced with the new attitude, I am a new creation in Christ, the joy of the Lord is my strength. I’m sorry I can’t think can’t anymore, because of who I really am now, I’m someone who can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

I love what the elementary teacher did with all of her kids, the day she had them right down all of their can’ts. They all wrote them down... “I can’t do math, I can’t remember my homework, I can’t spell”. They put them in a box, and she had them bury all of their cant’s. Then she had them make a list of all of their cans.

2. The power of the new self in Christ that many don’t realize is that we are not an old self trying to act new. We are completely a new self, Christ in us. Paul describes us as pregnant with the righteousness, goodness, the love, and kindness of Christ in us.

All that the old self is, is the memories of what we used to think, and the habits of what we used to do. The old self was buried in baptism. All we have left are the grave clothes of that old self. We are like Lazarus up from the dead. The command to the disciples as Lazarus walked out like a mummy was “unwrap him”; he’s not a dead man anymore. Jesus Christ destroyed the death in him. And He destroyed the power of lust, anger, jealousy, self-pity, rage in you. You have the full right to walk and live in your new nature.

B. One of the important things to realize as you take a stand to those old attitudes, thoughts, and habits is that even though you are now dead to them, it doesn’t mean they are dead to you. It is up to us to recognize each time the temptation and attack comes that we have to stand in our freedom by a choice, trusting in his power in us. \*(German Shepherd). Our choice to choose, to stand in our new identity is the power that brings freedom.

C. Finally, He says that resetting our heart means deliberately putting on our new self, which means, putting on new thoughts, new attitudes, and new habits. This is the essence of what growing as a Christian is all about. Growing as a Christian doesn’t happen simply by what we hear but by what we do. Faith isn’t a way of feeling; faith is a way of acting and choosing.

Many Christians say they want to change, but when it comes down to the nitty gritty in the way they choose to think, and the habits they choose to allow to stay in their life they don’t make changes. They accept thoughts, attitudes, and habits instead of choosing thoughts, attitudes, and habits.

Paul goes on the next two chapters to tell us the different thoughts, habits, and attitudes we’re to choose.

One of the sayings of Einstein was… “We cannot solve our problems today with the same kind of thinking we had and used, when we created them.” What is so powerful is the new self that God has given comes to us fully equipped with new thoughts, attitudes, and habits, fully revealed to us in His Word. They are the habits of our new nature; we simply have to choose them. God doesn’t push out old lies, He replaces them with new truths. He doesn’t tell us to just stop having bad attitudes, he offers a new one to replace it. He doesn’t forbid old habits; he gives a new habit to replace it. Freedom isn’t the absence of darkness; it is the presence of great light. This is at the heart of the resetting process.

1. For example anger… Don’t be a person who thinks about all of the bad things people have done to you, who takes on the attitude of a victim. Choose differently -Think like a forgiven person, think of how Jesus forgave you, choose an attitude of forgiveness… begin to speak words of kindness, develop new habit. The habit is not to go to bed angry and give a foothold to the devil. Stay active in the habit of showing goodness and kindness to people. I read of one person who did this by simply choosing to write a note of gratitude and encouragement to people on a daily basis. Just by the habit of love, the habit of anger, and the attitude of being a victim began to leave.

2. Another issue he addresses in chapter 5, is the issue of being a person in bondage to shame, a person who lives with secrets especially in regards to an immoral past or shameful temptations. He basically tells you to quit letting that old self dominate you. Begin to fill your minds with new thoughts of God’s cleansing and forgiveness. Open up in confidence to trusted Christian friends, develop the habit of confessing faults, asking for prayer instead of covering up and living in shame with your faults and struggles. “Live as people of the light”, describes this life of light as being someone who comes out of the grave and lives, where God’s forgiveness, cleansing, and recovery flows.

In every area of our life God has new thoughts, new attitudes, and new habits to claim. Many people feel so overwhelmed with their struggles as a Christian. What I love to tell people as Jesus once said to a man who struggled, “You are not far from the Kingdom of God.” I don’t know where you are in your walk and your struggles, but what I know is that the moment a person takes a step to reset their life, to put off the old, to put on the new, God unleashes the power of righteousness. Satan so lies to our minds to get us to believe that our struggles, faults, or failures are such big monsters, when, in fact, in comparison to Christ’s power within us, they are merely midgets. Paul challenges us in Phil. 2:12-13, *work out your salvation*, because it is *God who works in you to will and do of his good pleasure*. Your holiness, victory, your sanctification is His personal project, that He is at work to perform. Your step towards him, to choose new habits, attitudes, and thoughts will mean He takes a million steps towards you.

I love the little story Max Lucado told about a boy sitting on a bench waiting for his bus. He had been playing when his shoe fell off. He put it on and tried to retie the shoe but struggled until it ended up in a tangled knot. He didn’t know what to do. He saw an elderly man and said, “Sir, I have this knot, I can’t untie it. Do you know how to untangle really, really hard knots? Friends, one thing I know, our God knows how to untie really hard knots. As we take steps to claim our new identity, to choose new attitudes, and new habits, we will be amazed how quickly the hardest knots come untied.