

The Renewal Begins

Come up front and sit!! I want to tell you the story of a church service. It was a Sunday morning and people, about 250 of them, were starting their worship. As the pastor started the service and people were singing, he saw through the windows into the back of the church - in the lobby area where the offices were – and he saw that a number of police had entered the lobby, and they were heavily armed. They had flack jackets on, helmets, weapons pulled – he sent his assistant to find out what was going on, and after a short while he came back and said, “We are in real trouble. A man has shot someone, and the police think that the suspect ducked into the church and might take hostages. They want to walk the isles in an inconspicuous way and try and spot him.” “I have a better idea. Tell them to be ready.”

So he went to the front and said, “I want to ask you to come forward this morning and draw close to the Lord and start up front. If you are a regular member or visitor, please come up – and if you have come with a member of regular visitor, would you please come, too.” So people came, **everyone, except one man**, who sat there alone. The police saw that and thought – “That’s our man”, jumped him, cuffed him, and dragged him out. Then the pastor explained it to everyone. But it turned out they got the wrong man. It was his first visit to the church. He had come because he had been told that this was a place where he could find love and acceptance and healing and a wonderful presence of God.

So here’s the moral: **Don’t sit in the back!**

My Accident

Thank you for your prayers... Concussion 12 days ago when I fell

riding up in the hills on my mountain bike...

I did have a helmet on, cracked it thoroughly. Riding alone. Don't remember the fall. Called Bec on my cell phone, 'Fallen, scraped up pretty good, but I can walk. Don't know where I am. If I walk downhill, I'll come to the Ohio River, won't I?'

Shortly I walked out into War Memorial Park, and asked someone where I was. Bec heard them answer and told me to just sit down. She and Bill Henry came and got me.

They said I was pretty goofy. Nothin' new!

They kept me in the hospital overnight. I remember Dick Hogan asking me questions... 'What's your name, where are you, where did you go to High School, what is your wife's birthday (not fair!!)'

They let me out the next day and today I'm about 90% back to normal. But I still can't remember falling, and I have a bit of a hard time remembering the events of the week before and the week after the fall. So I now have a **really good excuse to forget things!!** So if I owe anyone money, I've forgotten! I can work with this!!

I was thinking about **Pentecost** this week, and I was thinking about those days between the ascension of Jesus and the day of Pentecost. You might remember that there were 10 days after Jesus left them before the Spirit came, and I was thinking how those days must have felt.

On the one hand, **something astounding had just happened...** and that, of course is the death and resurrection of Jesus. And for 40 days he had appeared over and over again to them, spending time with them. Teaching them. Friending them. Don't forget that. Part of

what had just happened was that **they had failed**, spectacularly. And then **he friended them**. He called them 'my brothers' and said that his God was their God. It was a wonderful moment of forgiveness and grace and mercy. So he met with them for moments like that, and then **he ascended**.

So there he is – or was – dead, and then alive and then gone. So there they are. Failed and friended and then alone. That is astounding set of events.

On the other hand, **something remarkable was about to come...** Luke tells us that...

"And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.""

(Acts 1:4-5)

They were **in-between times**. In between something remarkable that had passed and something wonderful that was coming. And they had been told to **'wait'**.

It occurs to me that this describes a lot of life as Christians experience it. We feel like we live 'in-between times'.

Something remarkable has happened.

Something wonderful is coming.

And we've failed, and been forgiven, and we're alone.

And told to wait.

What I want you to see is that this will not do. And that is why this waiting time lasted only 10 days. What I mean is that I can be forgiven and I can be friended but **if I am not changed**, deeply changed inside me, I will just go back to doing what I have always done. The **fundamental problem** in life is the **human heart**, and

the heart must be **cleansed and changed**. Cleansed is not enough!

Billy Graham said, *"Man has two spiritual needs. One is for forgiveness. The other is for goodness."* (The Holy Spirit, p. 11) The cross brings our forgiveness, the Holy Spirit comes inside us to create our goodness. Or, said another way, we need Jesus Christ for your **eternal life**; we need the Holy Spirit for your **internal life**.

So there must be more. And the 'more' is what Pentecost is all about.

His disciples **asked him a question** before he ascended.

Look at vs 6:

So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

Acts 1:6

When most commentators talk about this verse, they say, "What a **bunch of dopes**. They still didn't get it. They were still looking for Israel to regain her lost prominence. Still looking for an earthly Kingdom. Clueless!"

But I am not so sure. Lock in on that word "**restore**". And the word "**Kingdom**". Do you know **those two go together**? Jesus was **always restoring people** to health and life. And His miracles were a sign of **a bigger restoration** that was coming. Look how Peter says it when he is preaching just a few weeks later in Acts 3...

He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.

Acts 3:21

Jesus taught them that the time is coming when **God will restore everything**. 'Everything' is a big word. I like to remind you of this. It means **every bit of you**. Your body. Your mind. Your heart. Your will and relationships and attitudes and thoughts. Healed and holy

and alive and renewed and restored. It means **every bit of your life**. It means **every bit of this world**. Every part **of his cosmos**. Healed and holy and pulsing with life and glorious... and restored.

Near the end of Tolkien's great epic "**the Lord of the Rings**" there is a solemn moment when Sam Gangee (Frodo's devoted friend who has prevailed against astounding odds) says to Gandolf (the messianic figure who was dead, but is now alive), "*I thought you were dead, but then I thought I was dead. Is everything sad going to come untrue?*"

I think this was something of **the question that occurred to the disciples** as they spent those 40 days with Jesus. Just think about it... There he is, alive from the dead, sitting with them and teaching them about "*the renewal of all things*", and the Kingdom, their **questions come pouring out**.

- Can every sin be forgiven? Can any life be redeemed? Will every heart twisted and broken and shattered be healed? (Alive beyond death, he speaks. He holds his hands up)
"Every sin forgiven, every heart healed, every single one. Come to me; The renewal has begun"

When you and I think about 'the Kingdom' and "*the renewal of all things*" – we think **future**. We think, '**wait**'. But not entirely so. It has **already launched**. **Pentecost** has happened. The **Spirit** has been given.

Jesus' word here for '*the renewal*' is used one other place in the bible...

He saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit.

Titus 3:5-6 (NLT)

The **same renewing power** that will one day restore the entire

cosmos, **floods** into the inner life of everyone who opens their heart to Jesus, to give you **a new birth**, a new life, a new heart, a new mind. Right here. Right now. **Through the Holy Spirit.**

Here's **Jesus' invitation...**

If you believe in me, come and drink! For the Scriptures declare that rivers of living water will flow out from within." (When he said "living water," he was speaking of the Spirit, who would be given to everyone believing in him...)

John 7:38-39

The gift of the Holy Spirit is **for those who need more** than they can find inside themselves, for those who know that they **need the life of Jesus inside themselves** – his character, his love, his strength, his wisdom, his capacities, his life! Who need **the Helper.**

Ask Jesus for more of his Holy Spirit. Ask him to fill you... maybe for the first time, maybe again. We leak, you know. That river is for you!

(Open hearts, open hands) Come Holy Spirit... In the name of Jesus, come