

***“He Who was seated on the throne said,
‘I am making everything new!’ Then He said,
‘Write this down, for these words are
trustworthy and true.” Revelation 21:5***



**Behold, I am making all
things new**

Fourth Avenue Church

28 Days of Prayer

March 4 – April 1, 2018

We are so thankful you have decided to join with us on this journey for the next 28 days. Our prayer is that you draw close to the One Who loves you the most and let Him speak into your life in new ways.

Newness has both excitement and fear associated with it depending on the person you talk to. But in God, there is no fear, as He will lovingly mold you and shape you into the beauty He had in mind when He made you.

Sometimes as the days pass, we get in our mind of a God who dwells in unapproachable light, and doesn't get into the mess of our every day. We hope in the next month that you will take Jesus at His word -- that He loves you, He longs to bless you, and that through this love, He wants to make all of your tattered places new!

Enjoy these devotionals as you contemplate the greatest event ever to occur in history – The RESURRECTION!

The Prayer Team

Hey Mom, Dad, What's a Syno?

On the way home from worship one Sunday, a little four year old voice came from the back seat of the car wondering, "Hey mom, dad, what's a Syno?" Mom and dad looked at each other with befuddled glances and dad asked the little one, "I'm not sure what a syno is, can you use it in a sentence?" "Sure," the little voice answered, "Jesus loves me this syno, for the Bible tells me so."

Millennia ago, Moses encouraged the Israelites to take time to teach their children about God and His commandments in Deuteronomy 6 when he said, *"These commandments I give you... Impress them on your children. Talk about them as you sit at home, and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."*

Then centuries later when the disciples asked Jesus who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, he answered them with a rather direct and unexpected statement in Matthew 18 saying, *"I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like one of these little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me."*

Moms and dads, grandmas and grandpas, uncles and aunts are all experienced to teach our little ones the stories of Jesus. We are expected to teach them to love and to share, to trust and obey. But, Jesus also expects us adults to humble ourselves like a child, and to teach and serve in humility.

However, Jesus didn't just speak of humility, but he taught and showed us what true humility is by dying on the cross and taking our sins with him. Philippians 2 tells us "He humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross." And finally, three days later he defeated death through his resurrection.

So today, celebrate his resurrection with the same joy and assurance as a child when he sings, "Jesus loves me this syno."

Kimberly Ezell
New Life

Monday 3.5.18

September 3, 1967— my spiritual birthday. Baptized on a Sunday Night, by Myron Keith after coming forward on the first verse of “O, Why Not Tonight?” I was made new.

On September 3, 2017, I celebrated my 50th spiritual birthday. I am still being made new every morning because of the righteousness of GOD our father. Because of the death, burial and resurrection of HIS SON Jesus Christ through my baptism, I died to my old self; my old self was buried in the watery grave and I was raised to walk in my new life. Each morning, I get to enjoy my new life as a part of the body of CHRIST.

My physical body is full of cancer, I am now a Type II diabetic, and physically I am a total mess! But spiritually, GOD renews me each day and I am whole in HIM. What an incredible blessing!

Belinda Miller
Showing Extravagant Love

Tuesday 3.6.18

"The angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid,' for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said." Matthew 28:5

What a blessing! My Savior, Jesus Christ, promised He would rise after three days, and He did. What a show of love! What unending love!

What am I going to do with this blessing? How does it affect me? How will it reflect in my life? Can I smile at others more, offer more prayers, speak to them of my God, offer helping hands to all?

"This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." Look what my God did for me! How can I not share this love with others! 1 John 4: 9-10

"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God!" 1 John 3:1. Notice the word "lavished" which means "bestowed in extravagant quantities." If I am a child of God, should I not lavish this love on others?

I want to do this wherever I am any time of day. I want the people with whom I come in contact to see my "walk" matching my "talk" and illustrating the love God has so lavishly bestowed on me! I want the world around me to know my God is a God of love Who made promises and kept them. I want to show the people in my "world" that I also love them because of the God I serve by "lavishing" God's love on them and letting them know my God died and was resurrected for them, too! God, please, let me be Your hands to others!!

Jill Howard
Bring it On!

Wednesday 3.7.18

"And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new!" And then he said to me, "Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true.""

Revelation 21:5 NLT

I personally get a little anxious about change. However, in reading this verse, I feel hope rising up inside me. It tells me that bad things like pain, jealousy, ugliness, anger, and even death, will all be demolished. New life, continuous joy and happiness, love and beauty will cover us. To be in the continuous presence of the Lord without the danger of evil creeping in is so lovely and exciting to anticipate.

So, I say, bring on the New!

Deb Irvin
The Hardest Goodbye

Thursday 3.8.18

They walked a dusty path up to the church, which was set on a mountain side, the children that we were to spend the next few days with walked in groups and laughed and talked as they came closer to the door. I went outside to welcome them and was surprised by their immediate gift of hugs. They did not give the great big bear- I love you hugs, but tentative "we were told to hug you" hugs. They came into their church building, greeting each one of us, we were the strangers here.

Soon we began to get to know each other through introductions, songs and stories. We did not speak their language, nor did they speak ours, but we knew in our hearts what the other one wanted us to hear. We heard the songs and saw the smiles shining through. They came closer to us and we to them. The experiences are all different each day, but the one thing stands true, the hugs. When the crafts and games were done for the day, and the final prayer said in circle time, we were surrounded by these smiling faces. They were ready for hugs to give and receive!

By the end of day two, we couldn't leave these precious children without great big tight hugs that spoke so clear to my heart. Even the Tias would hug us and give us kisses on our cheeks, we in turn hugged back. It was a heart-opening event that needed no words, just open arms and hearts.

The day ended fireside with laughter and tears and sharing of stories of past events and of the day. We grew closer and more open to sharing our life and our hearts. What was happening to us here in this place? What happens every time one hikes to the top of the rock, or down the short path to look over into the valley and see the mountains in the distance? It's the coming nearer to God. It's giving your all to those who ask nothing of you but a hug each morning and each afternoon. It's the opening up of ones eyes to see what is the real reason to give your heart and love and time to others. It's the love of God. He loves us.

Our last moments came too quickly and the tears flowed freely and we hugged tightly not wanting to let go. We had all come to love each other the way God had planned it. In 4 ½ short days we had fallen in love with each child and caregiver and with the place they call home. We have been asked to come back. Will you come back? They all asked through sweet tears and smiles. Headed home I told myself that this was the hardest goodbye, I was not ready to leave them. These children will always be in my heart.

“Behold I make all things new” it says in Revelation 21:5. The meaning may not relate to this story, but it speaks to my heart. New things can be scary, the unknown, the success of a new idea. However, with God it’s all-possible. God took us to this place in a small country and poured his love into all of our hearts. He made a new thing, the relationship with these children and our hearts.

1 John 4: 7-8

Anonymous

Friday 3.9.18

Fourth Avenue Student, age 14

Prayer is for sure something that I struggle with in life because there are just those hard times that make me not want to pray because I don't always feel God's presence.

Matthew 28:30 says "*I am with you always...*" God is telling us that no matter who we are and what we are going through, God is undoubtedly always going to be walking with us even when we don't take the time to notice him.

Prayer is something God has commanded us to do. If we are to be obedient to His will, then prayer must be part of our life in Him. With all this disaster going on in the world, praying is the way to show we believe that God knows and has a reason behind it.

Oh, my dear children! I feel as if I'm going through labor pains for you again, and they will continue until Christ is fully developed in your lives. Gal. 4:19 NLT

Paul, the apostle, expresses a tenderness toward the disciples in Galatia by referring to them as his “dear children”. Indeed, they were his children, related by birth, the new birth that is — the one that the Spirit accomplishes in us. But Paul was struggling mightily due, perhaps to their carnality, childish attitudes, or lack of spiritual discipline in their walks with Jesus.

I know I've gone through periods in my life as a believer that I've lacked focus, experienced aimlessness, and yes, even at times, devoid of hope. Praise the Lord — God didn't abandon me there!

According to Jesus younger half-brother James, we all experience various kinds of trials, with the Lord aiming to mature our faith and character through such struggles. We struggle periodically in our transformation into Christlikeness, like a caterpillar agonizing in its cocoon (Romans 12:2) just before launching into flight into God's glorious creation. But we can rest assured that the Lord has us on a path of being conformed to His image (Romans 8:29). Thank God for His immeasurable gift of eternal life (including the present) and the sweet companionship we experience along the way.

Mimi Buttrey, Age 13
A New Name

Sunday 3.11.18

Why work so hard to fit in when you were called to be set apart? 2
Corinthians 6:17

We are all called to do certain things in our life. Whether it is mission work in Africa or helping your grandmother move some boxes it's those actions that God called *you* to do.

As Christians we are also called but it is to be set apart. Christians literally carry Christ's name. If you're proud of your earthly name, then why wouldn't you want to uphold your spiritual one? The privilege to obtain God's grace and mercy is done through a choice of faith. It is the choice to follow God and accept God's name over your earthly one. It is the choice to follow his call over your own satisfaction.

So don't work so hard to be somewhere that is a second in time compared to the eternity you will spend with the Father.

As I was driving on 1-24 right before my exit, there was a large bump and I kept thinking, "why would they not repair such a bump on a busy highway?" My thought was that if I don't remember that bump in the road, it is going to cause my vehicle to get out of alignment. Suddenly, I had an "Aha moment" with the Father!

Many times, we hit bumps in the road of life or unexpected bumps become an obstacle. We tend to remember the impact of the bump when we lose our job, have marital problems, financial issues, or the day-to-day challenges and think that somehow, we won't recover. 1 Peter 5:7 reminds us, "*Casting all your care upon him, for He cares for you*". Do we really think God did not know there was an obstacle coming our way? We sometimes respond to the bumps of life on our journey with anxiety and worry because we can see the bump every day and the thoughts come, wondering if they will damage me mentally, emotionally or spiritually. We feel we are unaligned or that somehow God's plan will throw us off-balance.

But the Father will use all things for our good and the bumps of life only come to realign our lives for His glory.

In Isaiah 40:4-5, the Father speaks a poetic image of removing the obstacles out of our way, He even shares that the low place will be exalted and that He goes before us even when it seems we keep hitting that bump in the road. God's glory will exalt itself above any issues we face and remove that bump that seems like a mountain. When it seems we are out of alignment, the Father's spiritual alignment will make every crooked place smooth again and we learn and are ready for the next bump.

Prayer: Father, we thank you that you are aligning our lives according to your plans and that you are making all things work together for our good and that you use the bumps in the road to bring glory in the earth and allow us to experience your faithfulness. When we feel we won't recover remind us of your resurrection power and that your plans will always bring a clear path for us to continue the journey. Amen

Isaiah 40:4-5 New King James Version (NKJV) Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth; 5 The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, And all flesh shall see it together; For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

Several years ago at a Portland Trailblazers game, a teenager named Natalie Gilbert was chosen to sing the national anthem. A few lines into the song, she began struggling to remember the words. It came to a point where she just completely stopped singing, unsure what to do next. At first, the fans tried to encourage her by clapping a kind of “you can do it clap.” But as she stood there stunned, scared, unable to continue, it became an awkward moment of silence where no one seemed to know what to do.

Enter Mo Cheeks, coach of the Trailblazers. He strolls right up next to Natalie, puts his hand on her shoulder and starts singing with her. Mo is not what you would call a “gifted” singer and it was apparent he struggled to remember the words himself, but the gesture completely changed the dynamic in the arena. The entire audience began singing; the players began singing; even the very stoic (I’ve never seen him smile) Gregg Popovich, coach of the opposing team, began singing. You can watch a video of the scene unfold on YouTube by searching for “Mo Cheeks National Anthem.” I cry every time I see it.

I came across that video again recently and thought about how much it is like what Jesus calls us to do: to be brave. To step up and help others when they need it. To do so even if we are not good “singers,” or good at whatever. To step up when the rest of the arena can’t or won’t.

We are called to be brave because Jesus was brave. He spoke up for the marginalized in a time where it was not welcomed. He loved people no one else would love—the woman at the well; the poor; the disabled. He put his own life in danger by speaking about such love, by calling out the religious elites, by challenging cultural norms. And the ultimate act of bravery, of course, giving up his life for us.

Our prayer theme is “Behold I am making all things new.” What if the new thing we desired was to be brave like Jesus? How would it change our families, our church, our community?

Joshua 1:9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.”

Be brave today!

Marybeth Duke
Good News

Wednesday 3.14.18

As a REALTOR, I assist clients in finding new homes. Sometimes those homes are newly built and sometimes they are historic, i.e., not new, but simply new to my clients. No matter the year they were built, the homes are not perfect and will usually need a home warranty or builder's warranty.

How many of us are excited at the purchase of a new car? New clothes? New job/career? The excitement, no matter how much we love the new items, is often short-lived. Why? Because the newness erodes or we see a flaw in the new item. The car may turn out to be a 'lemon' or gas-guzzler. The clothes may quickly become labeled as "so last year" or could fade in the wash. The job could be your dream job but the office environment may be hostile.

Who has traveled to a new and different land and felt lost or uncomfortable? Culture shock is common because customs contrast completely with what we traditionally feel is 'right'. Having lived in Europe, I experienced this first hand: imagine not being able to buy milk and bread after 6pm at night - and not at all on Sundays - because the stores closed at that time. Coming from a land where grocery stores were open 24/7 this was a new experience for me...not one that was very welcome.

Newspapers are becoming obsolete because by the time a new story is printed, the internet has sent the information around the world twenty times.

So, as anyone can see, when we set our happiness or hope on things that are new in this world, the newness can be either unwelcome or will quickly fade.

Here's the Good News: Jesus has made all things new! His Ways are Perfect! Our treasures are not on this earth, but in Heaven!

- So, when you have a problem or need, do not be anxious, but go to the Father in prayer. He loves you and will change the 'bad' into something good...and NEW!

Praise His Holy Name!

Marsha Reagan Change

Thursday 3.15.18

CHANGE. It's going to happen. From the moment we are born into this world, morphing from a fetus snug and cozy in our mother's womb into an infant breathing air and nursing from our mother's breast, change begins. Change comes around again way to soon interrupting the constant affection from mom and dad and shipping us off to daycare or kindergarten to compete with our peers for attention. Change comes in many forms throughout life.

Sometimes it's good. Sometimes it's unbearable.
Sometimes we instigate it. Sometimes it comes when we least expect it.
Sometimes we embrace it and other times we deny it.

Truth is, we will go through multiple changes in our life time, but at the end of our earthly life there will be only one last change. *"Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable and we shall be changed."* (1 Cor. 15:51-52). As we get older and our aging bodies go through changes, not so flattering ones at that, this is a comforting message from the word of God, a hopeful message of one last change promised to us who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Kevin Morris

Friday 3.16.18

“Behold, I am making all things new”

When Jesus says ***“Behold, I am making all things new”*** in Revelation 21: 5, it’s in the context of the new creation instituted by Him. Heaven and earth are renewed and become immortal. Jesus Himself becomes a new creation at His resurrection -- as it relates to the renewing of His physical and spiritual body, defeating death in a physical and spiritual sense.

The Holy Spirit raised Him from the dead and Jesus was testifying at His resurrection that the same thing will happen to us at His return, when he judges the living and the dead. I believe this new creation begins when we accept Jesus’ atonement on the cross for our sins and have faith in Him. We are crucified with Jesus and are raised with Him in His resurrection.

Jesus discusses the new birth/creation with Nicodemus in John 3. He tells Nicodemus in John 3: 3 ***“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God”***. He tells Nicodemus in John 3: 5 ***“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God”***. He tells Nicodemus in John 3: 16 ***“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”***

Jesus’ resurrection is a representation of the eternal life we have in Him made possible by the Spirit and our faith in Jesus. This is a miracle and it also sounds like what God said in Isaiah 43:19: ***“Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.”*** This is like the renewal that occurs at the new birth, when we accept the call to have faith in Jesus, in His atonement on the cross, burial, and resurrection.

Carol Smith
Ding Ding Ding...

Saturday 3.17.18

They're familiar sites:

A toddler patting an ipad to play the newest game.

A kid running to the xbox to try the newest level.

A teen holding the phone to view the newest texts.

An adult checking out Facebook to see the newest posts.

We're constantly engaged in the latest aspect of our electronic devices. And then there are the sounds. Like Pavlov's dogs, we hear the ding or the buzz or the chime, and we react. We disengage from what we're doing, and we plug in to our screens. Newness abounds, and we can't miss any of it. But in our rush to experience the latest in the virtual world, are we missing the newness of our Father's world?

Lamentations 3:22-23 tells us *"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."* Wow, the creator of the universe is doing something new every day! To quote the poet James Weldon Johnson, "This great God, who lit the sun and fixed it in the sky, Who flung the stars to the most far corner of the night, who rounded the earth in the middle of his hand" is up to something right now, during our tenure on earth. And this time we can be eyewitnesses of it all! I can't think of any game, text, or post that can beat that.

Judy Sullivan
When Love Broke Through

Sunday 3.18.18

Broken: fractured or shattered; violated or transgressed against

Broken with: sexual abuse, verbal and physical abuse, sexual addiction, alcoholism, codependency, shame, and self-will run riot.

When Love Broke Through (sung by Toby Mac)

I did all that I could to undo me

But you loved me enough to pursue me

You drew me out of the shadows

Made me believe that I mattered, to You

When love broke through

You found me in the darkness

Wandering through the desert

I was a hopeless fool

Now I'm hopelessly devoted

My chains are broken

And it's all because of you

When love broke through

Judy Sullivan (made new by God's grace)

*"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The OLD has passed away; behold the new has come."
2 Corinthians 5:17"*

This verse has particular sentiment to me as my sister shared with me just a few months before she died that it was her favorite verse in the Bible. And she was a diligent student of THE WORD, so to me that meant quite a lot to select that one verse as her favorite. I have read this verse a hundred times or more since she passed away 2 years ago. It brings me great comfort. Making all things new can also apply to Pam... her new eternal spirit life has begun.

While living on earth, believers in Christ have the security of knowing there will be no judgment of sin because Christ bore our sins in His body. This enabled us to experience a new birth, to become a new creation. But first, the old must pass away. In order to regenerate, a Christian must put away old value systems, priorities, plans and beliefs. On earth, evil and sin are still present but the believer sees them in a new perspective. HE stops clinging to old ways and comfortable routines, embracing change and being open to new ways of looking at things through God's perspective, letting Him guide our purpose, and finding security in Christ, not in circumstances. "The new has come" means we now live for eternity, not temporal things. If we allow these changes to take place, then our lives will be transformed, bringing glory to God as we continually strive to discard our old ways and allow ourselves to experience the new way of life that God has purposed for us.

(Summarized and paraphrased from my study Bible commentary and from the Sarah Young's book Jesus Calling.)

Allison Cathey

Tuesday 3.20.18

SPIRITUAL FORMATION: The Mystery of the Gospel and the Hope of Glory

“Behold, I am making all things new!” (Revelation 21:5). What a comforting and exciting affirmation that must have been to the first century Christians as they were literally being made new. They were *experiencing* the fulfillment of the ancient prophecies. God had promised generations before, through His inspired ones, that a time was coming when He would make a new covenant and reward those who believe Him and diligently seek Him by giving them a new heart and putting a new spirit in them—His Spirit, to move them to follow His decrees and to be careful to keep His laws, to save them from all their uncleanness (See Jeremiah 31:31, 33; Ezekiel 36:26-27, 28b-29a). “Then they will know that I am the LORD...I will put my Spirit in you and you will live...(Ezekiel 36:38b; 37:14a).

And live they did! The fulfillment of the promises was manifested in their new way of living described in Acts and by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:22-24 and 2 Corinthians 5:17. The new way of life was to put off the old self which was being corrupted by its self centered desires and to be made new, created to be like God in true righteousness. The thing that mattered most to those first century saints was a new creation (Galatians 6:15). Their lives were so transformed that multitudes were, and still are, drawn to desire what they saw manifested (Acts 2:42-47). So attractive and powerful was their peace, and love, and joy, even in all manner of suffering and abuse, that the world was changed forever.

Their salvation was not merely a salvation from hell in the future, but was a present salvation from the dysfunctional, self-protecting ways by which they interacted within all their relationships. Theirs was an awareness of the Kingdom’s coming on earth in the significant transformation of self taking place in selves who were alone incapable of transformation, but by the promised power of God’s Holy Spirit were made free from the fears and desires that had previously driven their behaviors.

It is this spiritual formation that is the message of the gospel so often overlooked in our willingness to settle for forgiveness of sins alone. It is the salvation for which we need to thirst, to which every person is invited—the salvation from *self* which makes life abundantly rich, and relationally

healthy. Those of us living in a Western culture of prosperity and independence must ask ourselves, "Am i being made new? Am I *significantly* different in the ways I interact with my family, friends, enemies, etc., from how I was before I became a disciple of Christ? Am I continuing to be made new? Can others truly see Christ manifested in me? Do others see me and long for the God Who makes all things new?"

Father God, may your Holy Spirit light a fire in my heart of awareness of, dependence upon, and surrender to Your constant Presence. And may that Presence in me be so attractive to the world that they too will be drawn to its transforming light and love with the same passion with which it spread in the first century. Teach me the practices and posture that foster an intimacy with You so close that it forms me more and more into the image of Jesus that you created me to be. Father, make me new!

Who doesn't love new things?

The smell of a new car.

The shine of a new appliance.

The crisp bright colors of a new dress.

But in the end the freshness fades and we are left with something that is old and faded. Scratched and dented. Ripped. Torn. Broken.

And so it is with ourselves. A life that begins with so much promise can become full of brokenness: dashed hopes, unfulfilled potential, disappointments. But Jesus offers us a fresh start. A new life. The chance to begin again. To become infants born again into the world with no past, only a glorious future ahead.

Nancy Baughman
God At Work

Thursday 3.22.18

"We're graced and made beautiful by God's irreversible forgiveness, His endless patience, His tender love. We're healed and made whole by the gentle Spirit dwelling within us." Brennan Manning

So the question that begs an answer is what response does the Father seek in return for His relentless tenderness?

I believe Micah 6:8 holds the answer, *"to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God."*

Staying in the moment of each day with the strength God's mercy and grace provides is the cooperation I give back to such Love. It is nothing we can do for ourselves, but rather the good work of a loving Father.

"For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose."
Philippians 2:13

Please Father God, do your good and faithful work to make our interior life resemble that of Jesus.

Mark Howard
Beauty for Ashes

Friday 3.23.18

If you've been born again, you know it. There's no mistaking the transformation from a life of self-centered posing to a life of true surrender and faithful dependence on Jesus Christ.

The difference is stark and beautiful, reassuring and peaceful.

Fear is replaced with faith.

Joy replaces dread.

A smile replaces a scowl.

Trust replaces suspicion.

Truth replaces the lie you've been living.

Relationships come easy and are meaningful.

Love is real.

Work is enjoyable and purposeful.

You sleep like a baby and wake refreshed; ready for whatever HE wants to show you today.

And the real good part of it is, you get to live this way forever!

"For you have been born again, but not to a life that will quickly end. Your new life will last forever because it comes from the eternal, living word of God."

1 Peter 1:23

Paula Shinnick
Through the Eyes of a Child

Saturday 3.24.18

Hebrews 12:1-2 *"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."*

During a recent trip to Disney World with our eight grandchildren, I received an unexpected blessing. Our three oldest granddaughters and I stood in line for over an hour at Belle's Castle. Inside, we waited in the library for a visit with Belle. When she came through the doors, Caroline, Hannah and Hattie's eyes lit up in pure joy and awe. They couldn't take their eyes off of her. This was a sweet moment I will never forget.

And then I wondered. What makes my eyes twinkle? What am I in awe of? The distractions of this world are real. But seeking the face of Jesus in daily prayer and meditating on the word enables me to keep my focus on what is truly important and life-giving.

Dear Lord, help me to be faithful in prayer and in time spent with you in your word. Help me to truly be in awe of You as through the eyes of a child. Let me bask in the joyful hope of your salvation. In Jesus name, Amen

Tannin Dixon, age 7
God's Promises are True

Sunday 3.25.18

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go." -Joshua 1:9

I go to Awana at church on Wednesdays. In Awana, I am in Sparks and I have already finished my second book! I have learned lots of Bible verses. My very favorite verse is Joshua 1:9. It is my favorite because it's a verse that reminds me to be strong and I want to be strong! And it tells me that God is always with me. And when it tells me don't be scared, I know I don't have to be scared of what is happening in the world and my city.

A long, long time ago, I had a nightmare in the middle of the night. I dreamed that my house exploded and my mom, and sister, and brother died, and I didn't know what to do or how to find my dad. I was really scared and crying. But then I remembered my favorite Bible verse. It reminded me that my Father God was with me and I didn't have to be scared. And then my mom came into check on me, so we prayed together, and I felt really safe.

I know that God's word is truth. So, when He said, He will make all things new, you can believe it's true! But also, you don't have to be scared because when God makes all things new, He will be with you then too! God is so awesome! He keeps His promises and that is so cool.

Sally Lieske
Equipped for His Will

Monday 3.26.18

We tend to dwell on the missed opportunities in our lives, I should have said this or I should have done that. Martin Luther writes about being born anew each day and God gives us new beginnings. Hope in the Lord and the avenue of prayer can open up to us new opportunities to accomplish His will and serve Him.

Lamentations 3:21-23

"This I recall to mind,

Therefore I have hope.

The Lord's 'loving kindnesses' indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail.

They are new every morning;

Great is Thy faithfulness."

Hebrews 13:20-21

"Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen."

Tania Williams
Submitting to Change

Tuesday 3.27.18

"I am making all things new?"

All things? What is that? All people? His entire creation?
Everything about me? What do I need to change? What do I need
to allow Him to recreate?

He may be making all things new, but I first need to submit to this
changing process.

It might even mean that I myself am "undone."

A word that has been on my heart is "uncommon." The more I study God's word the more I understand that He is calling us to be uncommon. What do I mean by that?

You go through your whole life trying to fit in and trying to be like everybody else, trying to get everyone's approval when really Jesus came asking you to be different. When he came into the world he did the opposite of what people expected him to do. He hung out with people no one expected him to. What people thought was wrong was right and what people thought was right was wrong! He changed people's opinion of what the kingdom should look like. He turned the world upside down!

He has set us apart to accomplish His purposes and to influence the culture around us. We are supposed to look different from the world and act and respond to things differently. I'm ok with being uncommon. How about you?

John 13:35 *"By this everyone will know you are my disciples, if you love one another."*

2 Corinthians 5:17 *"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come."*

The Resurrection of Jesus

Albert Lemmons

Thursday 3.29.18

When God first turned his attention to this planet his omniscience allowed him to see it from the beginning to the end. His forbearance and provision allowed his agape love and grace to overcome man's sin problem which began with Adam and Eve. Prophetic literature often refers to a "new thing" or ultimate gift from God to man. The total destruction of man's sin issue would be resurrection (*anastasis*).

Near the end of Jesus' thirty three years of his life historic events occurred which led to his resurrection. Not only does this fulfill God's promise of "a new thing", it was also a first event of all time. There are accounts of people returning to life after death: Moses, Elijah, son of the Zarephath widow, Lazarus, etc. The notable difference is each of these returned to the Hadean world. They were not resurrected, they were revived from death. Jesus was the "first fruit", the first to come from death never to return. This was Satan's ultimate defeat, I Corinthians 15:20-22.

The passion-week was necessary. There one sees the God-man, Jesus, laid aside the expression or form of Deity to walk among us and die. He never surrendered the essence of Deity. He changed form but not his original status as God. Therefore he is the Christ of God.

On Wednesday, as we describe the days, he arrived from Jericho where he encountered Zacchaeus and blind Bartimaeus. The Triumphal Entry was short lived. It soon became more evil than it had been good in its beginning. *Jesus entered Jerusalem and went to the temple. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve*, Mark 11:11. No doubt he wrestled with his Father in prayer that night. The next morning his actions were based upon his Father's will as recorded in John 12:49-50, *For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.* He obliterated the misuse of the temple, Mark 11:11ff. This severely angered his enemies.

Jesus established the Eucharist then went to Gethsemane and survives Satan's most horrendous attack. The spiritual battle was won. He is taken to the cross and finishes the physical battle by the ultimate sacrifice for all sin. He died that there might be no place where man finds himself in life but where Jesus had not already been.

The death and resurrection of Jesus conquered and destroyed the power of death. Because of his death, burial and resurrection the tomb has lost its power, the grave has lost its fear and death has lost its tragedy. Satan no longer holds our morality over us. Hebrews 2:14-15, *Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death-- that is, the devil--and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.*

HE AROSE! HE AROSE! Hallelujah Christ arose!

Laurie Lee
It's All New

Friday 3.30.18

Not having grown up in church, when I became a Christian **everything** about the Christian life was new to me...church was new, songs were new, having brothers and sisters in Christ was new, learning about God and Jesus was new, the books of the Bible were new and all of the people and stories therein. My faith was NEW. And it was an exciting and joyful time.

I've lived long enough now to view the word "new" differently. Because the newness of my faith wore off and all those "new" things became familiar and slightly tarnished at times. So how can "new" continue to apply?

I find help in this reminder in Lamentations 3:22-23 (RSV) (emphasis mine):

*"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,
his mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning;
great is thy faithfulness."*

If I consider his mercy, his love, his faithfulness...there is always something new that touches and recaptures my heart.

And when I find myself wandering...when I am restless and discontent...when my attitude is far from what it should be (which, if I'm honest, happens too often)...I have to stop and borrow the words from the Psalmist to lean into God for a realignment.

Psalm 51:10 (RSV) (emphasis mine):

*"Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me."*

But the ultimate comfort I find in the words of the song, "The Power of the Cross":

*"This, the pow'r of the cross:
Son of God—slain for us.
What a love! What a cost!
We stand forgiven at the cross."*

Because of the resurrection of Christ, the victory is mine and I am forever made new!

Margaret Coffman, Age 26

Saturday 3.31.18

(Written around 2007 at the age of 15 while in Youth Group)

I am from long 32 year old pews with green cushions.

I am from colorful nurseries with crying and playful babies.

I am from the huge auditorium that I've called "big church" since I could talk.

I am from a balcony where we didn't pay attention to the sermon when we were young.

I am from gated playgrounds with creaking see-saws and slides.

I am from the old rusty church bell that children ring just for fun.

I am from the front entrance with long handrails we still slide down.

I am from a small pavilion on the side of the building where dad lets us off when it rains so our dresses don't get wet.

I am from staying late on Wednesday nights at Starbuck because we don't want to go home.

I am from long walks around the Franklin Square with friends.

I am from Baskin Robbins ice cream on hot summer nights with the entire youth group.

I am from Tom Riley's sermons that always made you think.

I am from our youth minister, Pat who gives sideways hugs because he thinks front ones are awkward.

I am from a chatty teen section that is steadily growing.

I am from Sporadic "Amen's!" when someone agrees.

I am from "As the Deer" and "Amazing Grace" stuck in my head after service.

I am from whispers of prayer that surround me and give me hope.

I am from the bread and the cup that we take together on Sundays.

I am from that sweet but sour lemonade that we seem to have at every function.

I am from the best desserts you'll ever taste when the lady's try to outdo each other at potlucks.

I am from faith, hope, and love but the greatest of these is love.

I am from Fourth Avenue Church of Christ

Anonymous Thin Spaces

I've been there before.
The places are many but all the same.
Sitting in my chair,
or in a boat on a calm, cool lake
with no other soul within miles.

The two worlds, seemingly distinct,
and separate, and different,
are really one and the same.

A thin veil exists, one of our own making,
bred out of us by our superior minds.
Like the world beneath the waters,
we only experience it if we dip our hand,
then our head, then open our eyes.

When we do, we see!
Another world, not separate and distant,
But infused in our very being!

It's not in the noise or commotion.
It's not in the knowledge but in the feeling.
It's not in the doing, but rather in the being.
Not in the intellect, but in the heart.
In these thin places we find The Peace...

In The Peace we find our purpose
and meaning and strength.
In the Peace we find Love.