



## REBOOT: “Renewed”

**Bible Text: II Corinthians 5:16-21**

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\*Welcome to the “Reboot Series” – chapter two. Before we get into the message let’s check in. I wonder how you are as you arrived here today – something more than **“How are you - I am fine?”**

\***Did you enter breathless, on the run?** Too many Sundays that’s how get here, even though I come early! But too often I am *just* a few cups of coffee short of enough. Have mercy!

\***Or did you enter, carrying the weight of the world, or your little corner of it, on your shoulders?** Too many of us do. We carry the results of last week’s news, or last night’s game, the last little “dust up” at home, a discouraging word from someone, our latest health challenge, a declining bank balance, or something with us.

\***Did you enter on cue, as I did, because my calendar says Sunday?** It seems like every part of my life is carefully calendared, locked and loaded. A friend said he’d like to meet this coming week and I said, *“Looks like I have between 3:30 and 4:00 on Wednesday.”* Not good.

\***Did you enter quietly, seeking the anonymity of the last row?** If you did, let me assure you that you are welcome, but you are not alone. God knows where you are, even if you think no one cares.

\***I pray that, despite all that and more, you entered with an open heart.** Because within these moments, if you are open and not closed, you can the restoring renewing presence of God!

\***But that process will not usually make us comfortable.** For our lives to experience something real with God, we cannot just kick back and keep on doing the same old, same old.

\*Sometimes people try to minimize the message of Jesus and the Scriptures into a few *"this will make you feel better"* easy platitudes. But that has never been **His** message. Jesus is after more.

In John 3:3 Jesus said, ***"I tell you the truth: no one can find the Kingdom of God without being born anew."*** (John 3:3)<sup>1</sup>

It is the same message from Ezekiel's message for Israel, ***"I will give you a new heart, and put a renewed spirit in you."*** (Ezekiel 11:19)<sup>2</sup>

And Paul's message from our text today: ***"Anyone in Christ is a new creation; the old is gone, and the new is come."*** (II Corinthians 5: 17)<sup>3</sup>

I wonder how many of us, when our lives got stuck or we ended up at a place we don't want to be ever wished that we could just push \*CTRL+ALT+DEL, like we do with our computers and start again.

I've been there! \*I am under-impressed with the aging process. \*I remember feeling tired of feeling like I never could "get ahead."

\*I've been worn slick by work or kids. God help us!

\*I am way past exhausted with all the political wrangling in our time.

\*The primary for Kansas governor being the latest case in point.

To paraphrase the Bible, "we live among a people of unclean lips." Motives are mixed and truth with "no spin" is rare, even impossible.

\*But our problems are also internal, spiritual in nature.

Some of us are not entirely \*certain that we deserve to be forgiven. We \*carry our brokenness, the \*remembrance of mistakes of our past, a sense of \*our own inadequacies inside, where it never shows.

We are stuck between the wasteland of the past and the new possibilities that so far away that we feel we'll never get there.

<sup>1</sup> John 3:3, paraphrased by the author from the NRSV and Eugene Peterson's *"The Message."*

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Ezekiel 11:19, paraphrased by the author.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. II Corinthians 5:17, paraphrased by the author.

\*We need to be rebooted, restored, re-centered in something bigger than ourselves and renewed and refreshed for the inside out.

\*And yet we are here we are today. And that's something. In fact, it is a lot. There are dozens of other places we could have been, have been on other weekends. But you are here!

I am bold enough to believe that's not by accident. I wonder if it is possible that God has a message for you today?

For what it is worth. It's my experience that a renewal of faith and a restoration of the joy of life only comes moments of genuine honesty in the presence of God. Only then can God make us new!

We need to reach the point, like Isaiah, where we say: ***\*"Surely it is God alone who will save me; I will trust in him, and not be afraid."***<sup>4</sup>  
(Isaiah 12:2)

The problem is we keep trying to fix ourselves. \*We keep vowing to do better over here or over there. Be a more active parent. Stop complaining so much. Go on another diet. Start exercising. You pick one. But we don't go to the source for genuine renewal.

Bishop Will Willimon put it this way: ***\*"The Gospel is not a set of interesting ideas ... the Gospel is intrusive. It turns our lives around, and puts our feet on the path of a new way of living..."***<sup>5</sup>

How is new life even possible? Not by what we do, religious or otherwise. Only by the action of God. The hardest to understand verse in our \*text today is also the most important.

II Corinthians 5:21: ***\*"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."***<sup>6</sup>

(II Corinthians 12:2) Let me read that again. \*

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. Isaiah 12:2, paraphrased by the author.

<sup>5</sup> William H. Willimon, *The Intrusive Word: Preaching to the Unbaptized*, Copyright © 2002, Eerdmans Publishing.

<sup>6</sup> II Corinthians 5:21, *Holy Bible: New International Version*. Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission.

In Jesus, despite our brokenness and sin, God laid it all on the line. Because of what he did **for us**, we start fresh and new in God's eyes.

\*And if the cost is a moment of honesty and discomfort before the Almighty, well, I may not be the sharpest pencil in the pack, but even I know that moment is the path to what I really need.

Those moments come in different ways, maybe as different as we are as individuals. All I know is those are holy moments in which we experience genuine restoration and renewal.

\*Rudolph Otto calls those moments a "*mysterium tremendum*" - a tremendous mystery!<sup>7</sup> I remember those moments.

- At my confirmation, when I heard God's call in this verse: "*Let your light so shine, so it will give glory to your father in heaven.*"
- When God touched my heart when I was feeling useless and overcome in Trinity Church in Ruston, Louisiana. I felt forgiven and restored, and was made a new creature in Christ.
- When our youngest son was born and I knew the next decades of our lives would be forever changed.
- A holy Sunday not long ago when God assured me that he still had work for me yet to do.

The place doesn't matter. The circumstance and surroundings do not matter. What matters is that we experience sometime in our lives a moment of faith, which renews us and helps us begin again.

\*When we feel alone or afraid, we are not alone. God is with us. We need not settle for anything less than a new heart and new spirit within. We can be renewed and restored. Thanks be to God! And God has work for us to do! Amen. Let us pray.

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<sup>7</sup> From The Idea of the Holy, by Rudolf Otto.