

New Men for the Messiah

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Preacher: Chris Oswald

[0 : 00] You're listening to a sermon recorded at Providence Community Church, Truth and Beauty in Community. If you are in the Kansas City area, please consider joining us in person next Sunday.

We meet in Lenexa, Kansas at 10 a.m. every Lord's Day. Until then, we pray that as you open your Bibles, the Lord will open your heart to receive His Word.

Through Paul's words to the Ephesians, his prayer for the Ephesians in chapter 1, verses 15 through 23. Let's pray this prayer together before we open His Word.

Lord, we ask that you, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, that you would have the eyes of our hearts enlightened so that we can know what is the hope to which you've called us, and what are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of your power toward us who believe according to the working of His great might, the same power that you worked in Christ when you raised Him from the dead and seated Him at the right hand in the heavenly places, who is far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

Lord, we are about to open your Word and I will do my best to teach it, but as we see here in the prayer of Paul, there are things that need to happen to us that only begin with the hearing of the Word.

[1 : 42] So, Lord, would you open the eyes of our heart? Would you give us strength to perceive, to understand the immeasurable greatness, the immeasurable greatness of your power at work in us through Christ?

Would you open our eyes, Lord, and help us to see? We pray these things in Jesus Christ's name. Amen. Will we dismiss our kids to children's ministry? The rest of you can be seated, and if you'll open your Bibles to the book of John.

John chapter 1. The Gospel of John chapter 1. We're beginning our series in John this week. That series will take 21 weeks, and we jump right in with the first chapter.

I think you could say that one of the most important ideas presented in the first section of this Gospel is that the cosmic Christ has took on flesh and dwelt among us.

There's an emphasis on the bigness of Jesus in this passage that you don't necessarily find so clearly spelled out in the other accounts of his coming.

[2 : 47] For instance, in chapter 1, verse 1, we see, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

All things were made through him, and without him was not anything that was made. You know, back then there was no light pollution, and you could look up and see a kind of sky that honestly just brings awe to the heart as soon as you see it.

I read somewhere that in the perceivable universe, in the observable universe, I think is the correct term, there are more stars in the observable universe than there are grains of sand on the entire planet Earth.

John is telling us that the one who spoke all of those stars into existence and maintains their combustion in a perfect way throughout all of the universe, the one who spoke all of those stars into existence has come into the world.

That's continued in John 1, verse 9. The true light which gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.

[4 : 05] And then in verse 14, we see that all this cosmic power is compressed into one creature, Jesus of Nazareth. This reminds me, sorry to be a little crude, this reminds me of a quote from the great Aladdin.

As I was reading John this week, I didn't expect to think of Aladdin, but the phrase, unlimited cosmic powers, itty-bitty living space, came to mind when I contemplated what the Bible teaches about the incarnation.

Queen Lucy, Lewis writes, Queen Lucy in The Last Battle says it perhaps a little bit more appropriately, where she says, in our world too, a stable once had something inside it that was bigger than our whole world.

Now it's interesting, this idea of compression, this idea of a bunch in a small thing. When that happens in the natural world, what you get as a result is a kind of explosion.

When a highly compressed amount of energy is released out into the world, you typically get some kind of an explosion. And I think that you might actually say that that's an appropriate metaphor for the coming of Christ.

[5 : 24] What started out as a baby in a manger in Bethlehem ended up in three short centuries converting half of the Roman Empire to Christianity. Today there are around 2.6 billion people in the world that claim to be Christians, and that number is expected to be north of 3 billion by 2050.

So I think maybe the idea of unlimited cosmic powers, itty-bitty living space, the stable containing something that can't actually hold the whole world, this idea of the cosmic power of Christ contained in one man, I think maybe the term explosion is appropriate.

Now because this is the introduction to John, I do want to give you a little bit of a heads up. We are told explicitly in John 20 what the purpose of this book is. So I want to make sure as we start this series that we know this, as John waits all the way till chapter 20 to tell us his purpose.

But in John 20 verse 30, it says, Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book, But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing, you may have life in his name.

So there's the purpose of the book. These things are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing, you may have life in his name.

[6 : 56] We'll deal with that aspect of belief in a moment, but I want to draw your attention to this idea that John says in 20:30 and then again in 21 that Jesus did many other things.

The very last verse of the book of John says this. This is John 21, 25. Now there were also many other things that Jesus did.

Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. That's interesting.

He did many other things, and if every one of those things were to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that could, would be written.

Now there's two possibilities with a statement like that. It's obviously poetic in some sense, so maybe we shouldn't take it literally, but the question immediately comes when you encounter a text like this with a desire to do honor of the text and a desire to take as much literally as possible.

[8 : 00] Is there a way in which this is true? That if you were to record everything Jesus did, it wouldn't fit into the whole world? Well, Jonathan Edwards thought that the word did ought to be translated as accomplished.

He thought that that was a better use of the Greek and definitely a truer statement. Now there are many other things that Jesus accomplished. That's what Jonathan Edwards thinks we should have here.

And he writes this, if here by the things that Jesus did be not only the actions of Christ, but the things done or accomplished by those actions, we may suppose it to be literally true.

That if they were written, everyone, the world itself, would not be large enough to contain the books that should be written. There are other things that belong to what Christ did besides merely the external action that was immediately visible to the eye or the words that might be heard by the ear, which we must suppose are included in what the evangelist means by the things that he did.

Edwards continues, the apostle John in this history mentions some of them, but to mention all would be to write a declaration of all the glorious, wise purposes and designs of God's wisdom and grace and the love of Christ and all that belongs to that manifold wisdom of God and those unsearchable riches of wisdom and knowledge and the work of redemption that we read of in the scripture, which, if they should all be written, tis probable the universe could not contain the books.

[9 : 37] The point being is that you have this event. The creator becomes a creature. Unlimited cosmic power, itty-bitty living space.

And what you have as a result of this compression, if you will, is some kind of explosion out into the world that is changing the world to this day.

This got my mind earlier this week thinking about Krakatoa. The largest sound to have ever occurred in the history of the world was the explosion of this volcano called Krakatoa.

It was four times more powerful than the largest thermonuclear bomb we've ever detonated. People 3,000 miles away heard the explosion and thought that someone had shot off a cannon.

By the way, 3,000 miles away, it would have taken them four hours to hear the explosion. And it was loud enough even 3,000 miles away for them to think that someone had shot off a cannon.

[10 : 39] The acoustic shockwave of Krakatoa traveled around the earth three full times. It created multiple tsunamis that were 100, that had 100-foot waves.

And the explosion started a volcanic winter in the northern hemisphere. During the years following the explosion of Krakatoa, California had record rainfall.

And the sky was darker for many years afterward as a result of this one explosion. There were vibrant red sunsets all over the world.

Did you know that the jet stream was actually discovered because of Krakatoa? Because people could look up into the sky and see a channel of ash moving through the sky.

The sky was so strange, in fact, that in 2004 an astronomer suggested that Edward Monk's painting The Scream, you know that painting?

[11 : 40] Well, that was painted in Norway 10 years after Krakatoa and the astronomer said, that sky, that crazy red streaky weirdness, that's actually what the sky was like 10 years after the explosion of this volcano.

I started thinking about Krakatoa because I was looking for instances where one thing happens and then there's this consequential carryover over and over and over and over again.

And it's usually some kind of an explosion. The other instance I thought of was the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand of Austria. That one bullet, one explosion, one compression released out into the world took down this Archduke, the presumptive heir of Austria and really not only set in motion World War I but as a consequence World War II and our whole world is different because of one explosion that happened headed toward one poor Archduke.

So this notion of incredible power built up into something confined and then being released out into the whole world having massive consequences for years to come, well that notion is most true of the coming of Christ.

what we see in Krakatoa or the assassination of an Archduke that set off two wars and rewrote our maps is small in comparison to what has happened as a consequence of Jesus' coming.

[13 : 09] Now he obviously did many things and so how do you kind of narrow it down and say this is the main thing that changed the world? I think that the text does that for us.

In verse 12 we read, look at verse 12, of John chapter 1. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were not born, who were born, sorry, not of blood, nor the will of the flesh, nor the will of man, but of God.

I believe that this is the main thing that has gone into changing the world as we know it and is changing the world to this day. The creation of a new people who were once not a people, people who are now sons and daughters of God.

This is of course, the theme, theologically is called adoption, the adoption of the saints. And in his book, knowing God, J.I. Packer says it this way, everything that Christ taught, everything that makes the New Testament better, new and better than the old, everything that is distinctively Christian as opposed to merely Jewish, is summed up in the knowledge of the fatherhood of God.

Father is the Christian name for God. Our understanding of Christianity cannot be better than our grasp of adoption in Christ.

[14 : 39] If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much they make of being God's child and having God as their father.

If this is not the thought that prompts and controls their worship prayers and whole outlook on life, they do not understand Christianity very well at all. So for Packer, and I think this is absolutely spot on, the central achievement of the life of Jesus Christ is the production or the bringing of many sons and daughters to glory.

That is the central achievement. He did many things. The thing that made the most difference and the thing that continues to make the most difference in the world is found in verse 12.

But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave the right, the word there I think would be better as power, it's exousious in the Greek, he gave the right or the power to become children of God who were born not of blood nor the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but of God.

Now, let's lock in on that word born for a minute. There's something we need to make note of in relation to this concept of adoption.

[15 : 56] That's how Packer talks about it. That's how most theologians talk about it, adoption. And that's definitely a biblical word. A biblical word that is used to describe what happens to a person when they are made a child of God.

That's the word adoption. But you know, that word doesn't give us all of the meaning we need. Adoption does a good job of talking about or suggesting the transfer from one family to another.

Adoption is a good term to indicate the legal status we have when we become Christians. It's a good way of indicating that God did all the action, that he took it upon himself and delivered us into his family.

But there's one thing the word adoption doesn't get us. That's true. And that is it doesn't really communicate a fundamental change of nature. You get that?

So you can adopt a child and bring them into your home but the child they were before they were brought into your home is the child you'll be bringing into your home. Adoption works to describe much of what God has done in converting people but it doesn't work entirely sufficiently.

[17 : 11] And so that's why we have in John not so much the term adoption but the term born. because the centerpiece of that term is the idea of a fundamental change.

A fundamental change in nature. We see that repeated not only in this chapter but at the peak of John 3 when Jesus looks Nicodemus in the eye and repeatedly tells him you must be born again.

Keep that in mind the word adoption covers many glories of the conversion experience but it doesn't cover all of them. And frankly guys no one term covers all the glories of the Christian gift.

Right? And so in addition to the word adoption we need this word born. That is communicating this central idea of a change of nature. That's what Jesus came to do.

He didn't simply come to relocate us out of one family and into another family. He came to give us new life. Behold Jesus says I am making all things new.

[18 : 18] If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation. The old is past and the new has come. And this is why C.S. Lewis when talking about these very principles these very truths he said it this way in mere Christianity.

God became man to turn creatures into sons. Not simply to produce better men of the old kind but to produce a new kind of man.

and I want to suggest to you that that's why the world is so different after the coming of Christ. Because a new kind of person is walking the earth and there aren't just a few of us.

By God's grace working through church history over the last 2,000 years nation after nation has heard the gospel. The Krakatoan shockwave circled the earth three times.

the gospel continues to circle the earth over and over and over again. That reminds me let me do something weird right real quick. I got a text this morning from our friends in Pakistan and something bad is happening.

[19 : 24] There were no details just that something bad is happening and they needed us to pray. So why don't we take a moment here and pray just to give you a little background if you're visiting. We walk with a group of men who are caring for a lot of Christians in the roughest part of Pakistan and they do most of their work in secret and we've had this relationship with them for a long time.

Why don't we do this? Why don't we just take a moment and just pray for them? Let's bow our heads and let's pray. Oh Father we celebrate the fact that 2,000 years after your coming the gospel keeps circling the globe and resurrecting people out of death and into newness of life.

We celebrate the fact that you are making all things new and that people everywhere are hearing your gospel even today and believing and their nature their fundamental nature is being transformed.

But your word also says that through many persecutions and tribulations we will enter the kingdom of God. We don't know what's happening this morning in that country. We don't know what threat level this is.

We don't know if this is a personal tragedy or something bigger but we lift them up to you knowing God that we are so far away but you are so very near and that by the same power you work to save them Lord you will care for them and tend to them and that you are able to keep and establish them and present them before your throne and we ask would you just bless them.

[20 : 51] We pray especially for the leaders. We ask God that you give them energy, insight, wisdom, skill, discernment, help them Lord respond to whatever the situation is in a way that is manifestly of you.

We pray for your power upon them Lord. May you care for these folks. We know you do in Jesus name. Amen. So the gospel message is circling and circling and circling the earth and what it's doing when it hits the ears of those who are chosen to be saved is it is making them into new people.

And I think that's if we listen to Jonathan Edwards take that when we consider all that Jesus accomplished I think that's how yeah we couldn't we couldn't fit the world we couldn't fit all of the accomplishments of Jesus in that respect into the known world.

Just so you know as we enter into the book of John the central theme is new life. It is in almost every story almost on every page. Next week you'll be hearing about water being turned to wine and among the many meanings of that is the idea of conversion of the individual being made from a vessel of judgment into a vessel of joy.

In John chapter 7 Jesus stood up and said if anyone thirsts let him come to me and drink whoever believes in me as the scripture has said out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.

[22 : 22] That's what God has done to those whom he saved. He's put life in them. In the 17th century there was a young Scottish minister named Henry Scougal and he heard that one of his friends had lost the faith and become disillusioned with Christian living.

And so Scougal wrote him a letter which was later published entitled The Life of God in the Soul of Man. That's what John's talking about in our text the life of God in the soul of man.

Listen to how he describes the reality of being a new creation. Again religion and by religion he means a vital relationship with Christ again religion can be thought of as a way of life because it is an internal free and self motivated force.

Those who have made progress in it are not just driven by external pressures threatened by consequences or bribed by reward they are strongly drawn to what is good and take pleasure in doing it.

The love that a devout person has for God and goodness is not just because of a command telling them to do so but because of a new nature that guides and encourages them.

[23 : 39] They don't just offer their devotion as a way to appease divine justice or to quiet their conscience. Rather These religious practices are the result of the divine life the natural activities of a reborn soul.

He prays gives thanks and repents not only because it is expected of him but because he is aware of his needs the divine goodness and the foolishness and suffering that comes with a sinful life.

His charity is not forced nor is his giving coerced. His love makes him willing to give even if there were no external obligation his heart would still be generous.

So the central miracle of the incarnation insofar as it affects us and the rest of the world is that God as Lewis said became a man to turn creatures into sons not simply to produce better men of the old kind but to produce a new kind of man.

People often ask not often but sometimes comes up. What does this church do for the community? What does this church do for the community? And it's kind of and that has untold effects on the nature of this city the state the nation and so on and so forth.

[25 : 22] Our primary contribution to the good of this city is to enable encourage equip people to walk in this new life in every realm the Lord has placed them in.

So we help dads love Jesus in their fathering. We help husbands love Jesus in their husbanding. We help wives love Jesus. You understand the primary blessing we can give to the world is to help each one of you walk in the newness of life that Jesus has purchased for you and made possible.

We kind of exist to help you get in touch with this new nature and to let this new nature be the new default in your life. Galatians 5 Now the works of the flesh are evident sexual immorality impurity sensuality idolatry sorcery enmity strife jealousy fits of anger rivalries dissensions divisions envy drunkenness orgies and things like these I warned you as I warned you before that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God but the fruit of the spirit is love joy peace patience kindness goodness faithfulness gentleness self-control against such things there is no law what effect has Jesus coming fundamentally had I think in one sense you could say he has moved a whole group of people from living in the default of column

A to living into the default of column B and if our local church can help people to move out of column A and into column B I think we've done quite well for the community thank you very much the truth is that because Jesus has come and offered himself up for us a new kind of human being is in the world a partaker of the divine nature indwelt with the spirit of God he is the temple of the Holy Spirit he loves God he forgives those who sin against him he is generous he is patient he blesses his enemies he loves his wife with sacrificial love he raises his children in the fear and admonition of the Lord he offers his work to his employer as unto the Lord he invests his time and energy into positive life building things that promote human flourishing he's a man of prayer he meditates on God's word he honors his father and mother his belief and objective reality makes him capable of doing science just laws he is able to admonish the idle help the weak encourage the faint hearted and be patient with them all he starts to get real freedom over all of the vampirical vices that rob human beings of their life there are all these vices that the book of proverbs talks about that are nothing but vampires they simply come to suck whatever potential you've got out of you and sin so that they are free from sexual sin and careless speech and various addictions and the need to keep bad company he gives these people with a new nature a kind of divine discernment and he teaches them how to discern the difference between the truth and the lie these new people see

Jesus as both their savior and their model for their behavior and they walk around this earth with a kind of hope that is independent of mere circumstances knowing that one day they will be brought into his presence where pleasures are forever more a new kind of person is living on the earth that is the miracle that has made the most difference in the world that he came and he gave those who believed and received him the right to become children of God who were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but of God now with all of these super duper new Jesus powers you might think well what's to prevent a person from getting puffed up when they recognize it in very real ways they've moved out of column

[30 : 03] A and into column B what's to keep a person from getting puffed up well the text itself excludes boasting you see that we aren't born due to our own will we aren't born due to our own logic due to our own reasonableness we are born not by the will of man not even our own will but by the will of God one commentator puts it we shall have cause again in the course of the gospel to observe John's recognition of the complexity and mystery of a salvation which is both willed by man and worked by God while both sides of the equation are asserted here as they are throughout the gospel the stress falls on this point at this point on the sovereign action of God Christians become such by being born again by being born of God this birth is to be radically distinguished from human birth with all of its human initiatives all these are irrelevant in the case of spiritual rebirth it is not something we can take into our own hands we are born of

God so yeah it's an incredible thing to be transferred out of darkness and into light and to see the manifestation of God at work in your life this text precludes any kind of boasting this wasn't done because we were special many many years ago one of my daughters came up to me while I was studying and said so why does God choose why did God choose to save me and I said well the only answer that I can find in the Bible is that God chose the foolish things of this world to confound the wise that's the only explanation we're given as to who and why is that God chose the foolish things in this world to confound the wise I don't remember which girl it was they weren't impressed with that answer this new nature friends comes with tremendous privileges you are given the Holy Spirit Galatians 4 6 says because you are sons God has sent the spirit of his son into our hearts you're given access to the heavenly father!

Hebrews 4 16 let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need think about just this one thing friends we're all going to have times of need where do you get to go in your time of need the one who has been born again gets to go right to the root of it all right to the will in our time of need we have the incredible privilege of boldly approaching the throne of grace when you become born again you become an heir with Christ and you will inherit all of his riches Romans 8 17 says the spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God and if children then heirs heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him one of my favorite texts that

I want to show this morning is that when you become a new creation you have God's ongoing sympathy and compassion listen to Malachi 3 17 they shall be mine says the Lord of hosts in the day when I make up my treasured possession and I will spare!

them as a man spares you have his protection 2 Thessalonians 3 3 the Lord is faithful and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one you have his provision in Matthew 6 31 Jesus says don't be anxious saying what shall we eat or what shall we drink your heavenly father knows that you need these things we have a kind of freedom that you did not have before you were born again you are no longer a slave but a son and you have the discipline of the Lord so that when you get off track Hebrews 12 6 through 7 the Lord disciplines the one he loves and chastises every son whom he receives friends we all know that it is actually a great blessing to have a parent who will discipline us as we see the ones who don't didn't you have

[34 : 41] God's promise God's steadfast love promise to you Psalm 94 14 for the Lord will not forsake his people he will not abandon his heritage this is the main reason that Jesus came into the world to give all who believe in him and receive him the right the power to become new people people living with all the rights privileges of those in the family of God now look back at our text John chapter 1 and look at verse 11 I didn't read that one chapter 1 verse 11 he came to his own and his own people did not receive him how is it possible with all of the promises issued in this text and throughout the scriptures with this glorious promise of becoming the human being you are ultimately designed to be this glorious promise of all of these rights and privileges associated with him how is it possible that some maybe even in this room will not receive what is how is it possible that the

Jews in that day saw him and did not believe in him well the way that they missed it and the way that you may miss it is simply this they saw all of their main problems as coming outside they saw all of their main issues as things that were happening to them not things that were happening in them you want to miss Jesus walk through life assuming that all of your sadness and difficulties and setbacks are due mainly to problems outside of you the Jews wanted a new nation not a new nature and so long as they or anyone else continues to play the victim card embracing a sort of us against them identity their path to Christ will remain cut off and so will yours victimhood isn't simply annoying it isn't simply false it's destructive to the soul it encourages a kind of pride that will allow you to look at the glorious offers of

Jesus Christ God in flesh and say well that's not the stuff I need those who did believe and receive that he had come to give them new natures he gave them new natures I sure hope nobody in this room misses Jesus because they think that the inside of them is okay and that most of the setbacks and difficulties is all in the outside of them you will miss Christ if that is your view and that is the wrong view the truth is is that all of these glories that I said are true of the new creation these are things you need and these are the things once had will change your life you need let me be clear to those in this room and to those listening at home you need to be born again it's the best thing that could happen to you no other event happening outside the world could possibly touch the difference that is made when

Jesus gives you a new nature and fills you with his Holy Spirit everything changes when Jesus changes you now for communion I want to introduce what is the resounding central theme of worship in the book of Revelation in Revelation chapter 5 verse 9 we see and they sang a new song saying worthy are you to take the scroll to open its seals for you were slain and by your blood you ransomed!

people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God and they shall reign on the earth I want you to understand that they are in perfection and that there are all of the things that are unfair all of the things that are in opportune all of the problems they're all gone and what is the one thing they celebrate what is the one thing that makes them happy that Jesus bought their souls and gave them new life in him then I looked and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels numbering worthy is the lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing and I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea and all that is in them saying to him who sits on the throne and to the lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever and the four living creature said amen and the elders fell down to worship the dear friend who is in

[40 : 15] Christ would you come and celebrate this table today understanding the central gift that central gift being that through his power he caused you to be born of God and that you now if you're in Christ are a new creation the old is past and the new has come for those of you who have not been transformed in this way I want to encourage you to remain seated and to contemplate what it is that is left to do other than for you to do what John 1 12 says believe and receive this tremendous gift of transformation that he has paid for with his own blood saints come and participate in the table today skill