

SERMON NOTES & STUDY GUIDE • 2/19/17

MOVEMENT

Our sermon series, **MOVEMENT**, is an exploration of 2 Corinthians. The focus of the series is on the church. The church is not a building. The church is not even a conglomeration of people. The church is a movement, a group of people 'called out' (ekklesia) to meet and glorify God, and to represent His Kingdom to a broken world. The church doesn't sit still; it moves and grows. To be a Christian is to be on the move! Throughout this series we will explore what it means to be a part of this **Movement** of God.

People never change. That's what they say. People never really change. Well, if that's true then my mirror must be broken. One of the pleasures of returning to my hometown is seeing a bunch of pictures emerge from the last time I was here, when I was seventeen. Who is that young guy? If people don't change, there's something wrong with my mirror! Actually change is possible for human beings. A large percentage of the cells in your body regenerate every seven to ten years. Recent studies say the brain has a great deal of neuroplasticity—its chemistry and operations change a lot more than was taught in the last century when I was a kid. Change is not only possible, it is probable. Can you imagine a person that doesn't change? When we say "People never change," what we are actually saying is, "I give up. I give up on seeing him change. I give up on trying to influence her for the better. I give up on my own development—I'll never learn that, I'll never try that, I'll never conquer that besetting sin." People never change. (Yes they do). Well then what I really mean is: I give up!

Change is not only possible, but probable, or as we think about it I hope you see change is inevitable. Change is unavoidable. You are changing every waking—and sleeping—minute of your life. We are not robots, we are not machines, we are not statues, we are living creatures constantly growing, constantly changing, constantly developing until the day we die. The question isn't will you change; the question is how will you change. What will you change into? What direction are you going? Change is constant, but it is long and slow and sometimes so incremental you can't see it happening. But let me tell you a secret—you will always, always change more and more into the likeness of what you love the most. Our church is a ministry of transformation. We are being transformed. "And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." (2 Corinthians 3:18) This is a ministry, ours is a life of transformation, changing and growing into the image and likeness of Jesus Christ our Lord. As a church, as individuals, we are engaged in constant growth reflecting more and more the glory of Jesus.

Let's look at a few points in this one remarkable verse. **(1) "We all...with unveiled faces."** Last week we talked about the veil over Moses' face, from Exodus 34. The presence of the Lord caused an external transformation. Moses glowed in some way or another. But the veil was necessary to prevent the direct sight of

the glory. Now we see a new era, a new possibility. "But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away." (2 Corinthians 3:16). We do get to know God, we do get to in some sense see God, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Unveiled. Open. Unshielded and unashamed. As we will turn to the Lord, as we will allow the Spirit to move, we are now those of unveiled face.

(2) "contemplate the Lord's glory." Or you might be holding a translation that says, "beholding" or one that says "reflecting." Whatever translation you are holding, I suspect it has a footnote. This is a very difficult thing to translate, but it means all those things. It means beholding like a mirror, but carries the idea that the one doing the looking is the one doing the reflecting. Psalm 34:5 says, "Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame." When you look at the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, you behold His glory, and in beholding His glory, you reflect His glory. His light shines on you, His light reflects off you, the more you see Him and look to Him and contemplate Him and behold Him, the more you reflect Him. Like a mirror. Like that bright-colored sweater that kind of changes the color of your face—makes your eyes pop! You reflect what you contemplate. Where are your eyes? What are you studying? Where is your devotion? What are you seeking with all your heart? Seek the Lord and you will find Him, when you seek Him with all your heart. And in beholding God you will reflect the glory of God.

This is why we worship, you know. Why should we worship God? Does it seem wasteful sometimes? Does it seem self-indulgent in a way? Have you been tempted to skip it, as though it's not the most important part of your spiritual growth, the most important marker on your family calendar? If we are serious Christians, shouldn't we be out there doing serious Christian business, caring for the sick, feeding the hungry, helping the helpless, engaging others with the Gospel news? If we want to do those things and do them well; if we want to do those things and reflect the glory of Christ, we must first come in here and gather in His presence and sing His praise and receive His Word and be fed at His table and rest in the fellowship of His people. We must be rooted in worship to be fruitful for God. God enjoys our worship because our worship is right—it might be the only truly right thing I do all week sometimes. God enjoys our worship because He is worthy, He alone is worthy of our highest devotion and praise. God enjoys our

worship because God loves to see us enjoying Him. God enjoys our enjoyment of Him! In worship we—we all with unveiled faces—behold the glory of the Lord. In that unveiling, in that beholding, there comes a reflecting and a transformation.

(3) We all...unveiled...beholding... "are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory." We are being transformed. Formed across boundary lines. Transformed. Into what? Into His image. Into His likeness. This is not a new shape, but a restoration of all we were made to be. In Egypt we saw a lot of statues and monuments in the museum. They were pieced back together after falling apart over time. They had enough of their shape to be restored by an expert. So it is with us. As was once said, "Imagine a statue which has been shattered into fragments and in which the glorious image of the king is no longer discernible. The wise artificer and skilled craftsman, seeking to regain the beauty of his work, shapes it anew and restores it to its former splendor. So it is with us. Afflicted as we are because of our disobedience to the command...we have been recalled to our original glory as the image of God." (Basil of Caesarea, *Concerning Baptism*) Believer, you are not done; you are not unchanging. You are being transformed. As you look to the Lord with unveiled face, as you behold His glory, you are being restored. Your beauty is being regained, reshaped to its original splendor. Beauty isn't just for youth; beauty is the restored image of God in the soul. You are growing in beauty. You have been recalled to your original glory in the image of God. Are you ready? Are you willing to change? Or have you given up? Because people don't change. Moses felt the glory of God on his countenance; we feel the glory of God in our character. Moses was changed on the outside, but we are being changed from the inside out. You are being transformed from glory to glory.

This week we started elder training. It's my privilege each year to train incoming elders called to serve our church by seeking the will of Christ—the active Head of our church. I have elders read a chapter from John Ortberg, *The Life You've Always Wanted*. The chapter is called "Surprised by Change" and tells the story of a guy named Hank. Hank was a grumpy guy. "He had a knack for discovering islands of bad news in oceans of happiness. He would always find a cloud where others saw a silver lining." You know Hank, don't you? "His native tongue was complaint." Apparently he was fluent. Ortberg goes on to tell some funny stories, but then says, "Hank could not effectively love his wife or his children or people outside his family.

He was easily irritated. He had little use for the poor, and a casual contempt for those whose accents or skin pigment differed from his own. Whatever capacity he once might have had for joy or wonder or gratitude atrophied. He critiqued and judged and complained, and his soul got a little smaller each year." Now, what's the problem? Hank's the problem. Hank isn't changing. Hank isn't growing into the likeness of Jesus Christ. In fact, Hank is getting worse. But the problem Ortberg wanted to point out was not Hank's lack of positive, Christ-like change over the years, but that the leadership in the church didn't seem to think it was a problem for Hank to stay like he was. They didn't expect Hank to change. In fact, they would have been surprised if Hank grew in the likeness of Jesus. That's wrong!

We are a ministry of transformation. If we are not all, every one of us, changing more and more into the likeness of Jesus Christ, into the restored image of God in us, then there's a serious malfunction. Leaders, elders, pastors, all of us must be expecting change, praying for change, encouraging and celebrating transformation. Or did we give up? First Pres is a ministry of transformation. If you're not changing, something's wrong. So that's the first question in the application of this verse: Do you see First Pres as a ministry of transformation? The worship we engage, the Word of God we study, the sacraments the fellowship, the prayer, the service...they are all meant to change us. We are being transformed.

The second question is this: Do you see those around you as in process, or potentially in process, of being transformed in the likeness of Jesus? You know the saying: we judge others by their results and judge ourselves by our intentions. Well, we want others to see us as in-process, "be patient, God isn't finished with me yet." But we often look at others as finished products and have no patience with them in their growth process—they are like cement, we figure, all mixed up and set for life. But that's not true. The people around you are changing. The question is what direction they are changing. What are they changing into? The fiction author Gordon MacDonald wrote a story called *The Princess and Curdie*. Curdie was a boy with a special gift—by his touch he could see what someone was going to become, a beast or a glory. The people around you are in process. I recently saw these two photos posted side by side. The same man. One picture when he was at his worst, homeless, powerless, traumatized, confused. Then this picture. With a little bit of help, with a little bit of healing, he is restored. He is in process toward whole-

ness. That wasn't a spa makeover either! It was genuine life change. You know, it's actually kind of fun. Look around and those you know, those who seem far from God, those you would never think to ask to church or expect to come to Christ. Just imagine for a minute what they might become if God got a hold on them!

But, finally, the question is this. We are a church bringing transformation to believers. Believer, child of God, are you being transformed? Or have you given up? Sometimes the change is so slow, so painfully incremental, we don't see it. But you are growing. You are changing. You are being transformed. As you are rooted in this community of faith, as you get founded here and your roots grow deep, you are being transformed. It's not easy to watch a tree grow. You don't see much progress when you stand there and watch. But it's growing. You too, as you worship, as you with unveiled face behold the glory of the Lord, you too are experiencing spiritual growth and being restored in the likeness of Jesus. Slowly we grow less attached to sin and more attached to holiness. Slowly we starve out vice and nourish virtue. Slowly we are restored.

John Ortberg writes, "The goal of such growth is to live as if Jesus held unhindered sway over our bodies. [To] grow spiritually means to live increasingly as Jesus would in our unique place—to perceive what Jesus would perceive if he looked through our eyes, to think what he would think, to feel what he would feel, and therefore to do what he would do." We are being transformed ever more into the likeness of Jesus Christ. By what power? By what authority? All of this, look again, it "comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." People don't change. Nonsense. People are changing all the time. You are changing. I am changing. What are we changing into? Submit yourself to the power of the Holy Spirit in your life, give your life, your whole life over to God, put your faith all you know and trust in Jesus, and the Lord the Spirit, the Restorer, the Giver of Life, will guide you into all righteousness, and you with unveiled face will behold the glory of the Lord, being transformed into his image from glory to glory by the power of the Spirit of God. You will reflect the eternal glory of Jesus. You will be a light, a witness. You will be what you were meant to be all along. Filled with the life and light of Jesus Christ.

STUDY GUIDE

"Transformation to the Believer"

2 Cor. 3:18

Start It

- In eight weeks of Basic Training I went from 175 pounds to 140. We ran and exercised more than I ever had in my life. When my then fiancé Abigail hugged me, her arms overlapped! I recently saw a friend who lost fifty pounds due to a medical problem. I almost didn't recognize him. But there are other types of transformation than physical transformation. Sometimes it seems like people never change. Other times it seems that people undergo radical transformation very quickly.

Study It

- Read 2 Corinthians 3:18.
- "And we all." Do you remember who the "we all" is? Skim back to the beginning of the letter. Who does "we all" include?
- "With unveiled face." There are a few different theories about the veil Moses wore when his face was glowing from intimate communication with God. Was he worried about how it quickly faded away (as Paul suggests in verse 13)? Was he protecting the people in some way from the glory (as Paul suggests in verse 7)? It must be both/and, I suppose. How do you understand the veil? What does it mean to have the veil removed when you turn to Christ?
- "Behold the glory of the Lord." Your translation either has "behold" or "contemplate" or "reflect" here, and probably has a footnote with another option. To behold the glory is to reflect the glory. In what ways do you try to behold the glory of the Lord? When in your day or your week do you take time to deeply contemplate, peer into, the glory of the Lord?
- "Are being transformed." The verb here is "metamorphow"—where we get our word metamorphosis. That's not a small change, is it? That's a transformation. In what way does beholding the Lord cause transformation? Have you seen change in those around you who have "seen Jesus"? How about the change in your own life?

Pray It

O Lord, our God, to look to You is to lift our heads, to see You is to be filled with Your light and grow radiant with Your glory, to have our eyes unveiled is to see Your face, and to see Your face is to be transformed into Your likeness. Grant us grace to live with unveiled eyes, grant us strength to look into Your light, and let us know the joy of a life transformed into the likeness of Jesus. In His name, Amen.

Live It

Consider those in your life in whom you hold no hope for change. Look at them again and see them in the process of being transformed. Change your prayers for them.