

New Years Revolution

It's Never Too Late

December 31, 2023

Today we're going to be reminded, that with Jesus, it's never too late for a new you!

So here's today's question: **Are you aiming for a better or a brand new you?**



One of the best things about a New Year, is a fresh start. Not every year, but for many years, I'd write down a list of all the awesome things I was gonna' do in the coming year: get to the gym; go on a bunch of great hikes; eat more salads; try to get my biceps to look like Craig Caulk. You know, the usual stuff!



Resolutions are essentially like goals. They give us something to aim for! **They help us think about being better.** I mean, who doesn't want to get a little *better* right? But here is the truth, as I look in the mirror, a *better* me is not really the goal. I don't need a better me; I need a whole *new* me! In other words, **I don't need a resolution, I need a revolution!**



Revolution means real change! Out with the old, and in with the new. The Revolution of 1776 happened because people said they wanted the most significant government change possible; they wanted a whole new *way of life*, not just a *better version* of the old. A whole *new* you might sound impossible, maybe unimaginable. You may be saying, **"Yeah that sounds great, Aaron, but you don't know my past; you don't know what I've done... you don't see what I see in the mirror."**



You're *right*, I *don't* know. But I *do* know this, **with Jesus, it's never too late!** New life can happen to anyone, anywhere, at any time! How 'bout the story of the WOMAN caught in adultery? Listen to what Jesus says to *her*:

The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do You say?" ... But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with His finger. When they kept on questioning Him, He straightened up and said to them, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin." – John 8:3-11 NIV

The teachers of the law were constantly trying to trap Jesus – to get Him to break God’s law or Roman law. So, they spung this woman on Jesus in the middle of church. Their hope was to get this troublemaker, this rabble-rouser Jesus guy out of the picture so they could get on with their quiet, peaceful lives.

Ironically, these guys knew God’s Word better than anyone. They were highly educated, knew all the “right” answers, yet missed the most important part – **they didn’t know how to live it!** And these are the same guys who Jesus warned:



“Woe to you teachers of the law, you hypocrites! Out of duty of performance you tithe your spices, but you have neglected the more important matters – justice, mercy, faithfulness... You are like whitewashed tombs, [sparkly] clean on the outside, but on the inside, there is death and decay.” – Matthew 23:23,27-28 NIV



There isn’t another group in the entire Bible that demonstrates more blindness and pride than these religious rulers; totally oblivious to their own shortcomings, their own hypocrisy.



These were *not* guys who got up in morning and said to their wives, **“Honey, would you make me keenly aware of all my faults! Don’t hold back now, really let me have it!”** *You know, like we do, right?*



These were the guys who thought they knew it all, and as they stood in the church lobby, stones in hand, ready to kill this woman, something incredible happens – Jesus asks these guys to look in the mirror. And maybe for the first time, **they saw something ugly!** And, one by one, these guys put down their stones.

Well, **Jesus asks us to put down our stones.** And our stones can fly for any number of reasons, even here in the church. Things like politics, values, being a Husky or Cougar fan can all get us reaching for our stones.

One stone I’ll never forget, came from a less-than-gracious older gentleman about 10 years ago. I was preaching that Sunday, and within 20 seconds of stepping off the platform I was met with Bob. Bob was that one guy in church who felt like it was his job to keep me humble. He had these big, grumpy, unkempt, eyebrows. They cascaded over his glasses (I can still see those eyebrows sometimes, when I close my eyes at night). Bob said this, **‘if you keep preaching like that, people are gonna stop showing up.’** I mean, I would never throw a stone at Bob or point about his big grumpy, unkempt eyebrows- come on. I’m sure Bob’s intention was to help, but that stone hurt!

Now, you might be looking at the adulterous woman this morning and thinking to yourself, adultery, wow, that is one of the biggies. **‘I’ve made some mistakes, but at least I haven’t done that.’** Well, I hate to break it to you, but every one of us has fallen short of God’s standard! And thinking otherwise is foolish! Like the loud, religious guy overheard thanking God that *he’s* not like *that* loser over there:

Thank You that I am not like those other people – crooks, evil doers, adulterers – or even like this tax collector right here. – Luke 18:11. NIV



Point is, **we put down our stones when we realize we're just as broken as our neighbor.** Only by God's grace do we sit here today with *breath* in our lungs, *clothes* on our back and *food* in our fridge. God does *not* love you *more* because you have more *education*, a nicer *car*, more *money* in the bank or cuz you can recite the books of the Bible *backwards* faster than the person sitting next to you.



Take Paul, here's a guy that could've said **"Come on, I wrote most of the New Testament. I'm the first missionary. I'm kind of a big deal."** And yet, listen to what *he* says:



Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the worst. – 1 Timothy 1:15 NIV



Cuz through Christ, he saw things clearly. So **he wasn't surprised by what he saw in the mirror.** He saw a broken sinner, like all of *us* do.

While it is all too easy to throw stones at others, **the most common place to throw stones, is at ourselves.**

One of the main reasons why we don't see a total transformation in *our* lives is because **we allow our past to impact the present.** There are plenty of reasons for us to look back, with shame and regret in this life. **"I should've, I wish I hadn't, why didn't I, if I just would've..."** I've said them all; some even this week. Maybe *you've* been saying some of these *same* things to *yourself*!

For some of you it sounds unimaginable to be *free* of your past. There have been decisions, circumstances in each of our lives that we feel like we need to pay for over and over.

Things done, things said that you feel God may not repair – things too big *even for Him!* If you've ever thought to yourself, **"it's too late – God could never forgive me for that..."** – well, this morning I hope you hear Jesus loud and clear, yes – you are the worst! But, only by God's grace, the story Jesus writes doesn't end there. He's all about leaving the past *behind* and making a fresh start with a brand *new* you! The old is *gone!* Like He says to the adulterous woman, "Go now and *leave* your life of sin."

There is nothing in the Bible that says the adulterous woman expressed shame and guilt, but you can imagine it, right? You can't help but think that she may have felt heavy, burdened, maybe even hopeless about her future. **"This is what I did, I guess this is just who I am."**

But with Jesus, the story of guilt and shame is *over.* The story isn't just better, it's brand new:

There is *no* condemnation for those who know Jesus. – Romans 8:1 NIV

So, if He's in your story, condemnation isn't! Jesus paid for all the junk we've ever done, or will do, right there on the cross. **All that's left is to believe it!**



I have always been curious about what Jesus writes in the dirt. Was it just a message to this woman or did he write something for all to see. Did he draw a picture of a whitewashed tomb with an arrow pointing to those guys? Did He remind this woman that she was God's child that He loves no matter what? Did he write her name? Or did he just write, **"It's not too late!"**



The Bible doesn't tell us, but it's the same finger that wrote in the dirt that brought life out of nothing as He formed man out of dust.



It's the same finger that wrote God's commandments on the tablets of stone. It's the same finger that gently touched the blind man's eyes and allowed him to see for the first time. And it's the same finger that knit you together in your mother's womb.



But, if she didn't know that, imagine the terrible, overwhelming fear that might've crept in as this adulteress woman stood there waiting for the stones to fly. I get this idea that maybe she covered her head or closed her eyes, and thought, **"Well this is it, I guess I had a good run."**



After all, all mistakes deserve a punishment, *right?* Yes they do. And yes *she* did. We *all* do. But here's the thing, the one person with the power to punish her, sets her free and changes her story. Which is why it's only His opinion that matters; and *He* said, **"Neither do I condemn you ... Go now and leave your life of sin."**



In other words, **this woman's slate is wiped clean!**

But **Jesus' words come with a challenge.** He didn't say now go and *try* and sin a little less. He didn't say go and try to be *better* version of your old self. That'd be making another *resolution*. No, He says go and change your life! **Go and live a new life!**

The Bible doesn't tell us if this woman ever slipped back into her old ways or if she fell back into temptation. But we do know that once she met Jesus, she was never the same. She came to Him a woman in ruins. She left as a woman with a second chance. And that's who she saw in the mirror from then on.

It's the same thing for us. Once we meet Jesus, **He offers us a new life not just a better, improved version of our old life.** And the question for us is, **will we take Him up on that offer?**

So, I'm not sure what you'll see in the mirror this coming year, but if you need a New Years Revolution, try Jesus.