**Everything New**

Well in case you didn’t notice it is Youth Sunday. Some of the youth that you have seen up here today went to Challenge, which, for those of you who don’t know, is our national youth conference. We wanted to take some of the things we learned and share it with you. So after the first night I knew I wanted to do something that would allow me to share what I had already learned, so I prayed and prayed that I could find a way to share my experience. After lots of prayer I felt led to preach. So in turn I asked Pastor Peter and Pastor Mike and we set a date… October 7, 2012.

So here I am and I am excited to tell you about my experiences and findings at Challenge 2012. Now there are a lot of references that were first made by speakers at Challenge including Francis Chan, Bryan McWhite, Eric Mason, Craig Gross, and Shane Stacey. I gained a lot of information from them and titled my sermon Everything New.

**-New God and New News**

Now when you hear me say New God or New News, don’t think that God or his plan of salvation has changed. The point is that we as His children are seeing Him and His plan in a new light.

First we have to come to a realization. Those of you who were here when we got back from Challenge heard a little bit of my awe of the supremacy of God. Well I am still in awe and hope to always be. This God of all the universe is allowing us to talk WITH Him not just to Him, He answers. He also allows us to touch His holy word, let alone read it.

We are going to look deeper into the heart of God in Colossians as Paul writes to the church in Colossae. Go ahead and turn to Colossians 1:15-20. As we dive in Colossians let us open our hearts to this word of the God of everything. May our hearts bow before His greatness.

In Colossians 1:15-20 this word of God reads:

15He is the image of the invisible God the firstborn of all creation. 16For by Him all things were created in heaven and earth visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him. 17And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. 18And He is the head of the church. He is the beginning the firstborn from the dead that in everything He might be supreme. 19For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20and through Him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven making peace by the blood of His cross.

Verses 15-17 are talking about Jesus having the rights and privileges of creation referring to Him as the Firstborn. To put it in perspective think about this. The earth is currently: rotating about its axis at 1000 mph, revolving around the sun at 67,000 mph, and maintaining a distance of 93 million miles from the sun. We are allowed to have a relationship with The One who holds all that together. Think of that when your devotions seem boring or every time you pray. It might just deliver a new healthy dose of reverent fear.

My accountability partner and I were spending time talking about thoughts we had on our mind. I mentioned the fact that I was getting another go around of the awe I had from Challenge. I told him I was thinking how crazy it was to try and imagine that there is no ending of Christ and His kingdom. He said and I quote, “You know what’s even crazier? There was never any beginning.” WOW!!! I mean, what are you supposed to think? My mind started spinning in circles trying to wrap my emotions around this. That put it into an unimaginable perspective for me

You ask people what they’re going to do when they get to heaven. I have heard this response. People will sometimes say run up and hug Jesus. NO! In Revelation 1:12-16 John has a “vision” of Jesus and he actually faints. You aren’t just going to run up to the Almighty God. You’ll be kneeling and bowing in reverent fear.

Leading into the end of this section; Colossians 1:19-20 talks about Him reconciling for us. Wait…What?! This great God of the universe is reconciling for us? This is saying Christ went to the Father and took our punishment to make us clean before our God. In verses 21-29 Paul starts into his ministry talking about how he plans to use the news and spread it. In verse 25 he calls it a stewardship from God. Some may say they are afraid to share or witness. I know, I get nervous, but how can we not share when it is for Him???

At the end of Matthew 10 Jesus talks about accepting Him as well as the Father. Think about it like this: If you confess Him, He’ll confess you. If you deny Him, He’ll deny you. This great God has given us this life to gain a relationship with him and show others what we have. We need to use that gift. He gives everything we have. The only reason I’m here right now is because he is sustaining my body to carry on. While I’m here I need to use it for the right reasons.

Tell yourself: I don’t know when I’m going to die… Then ask: Am I ready? Will you have completed what God wants for you in your lifetime?

So first we have New God and New News.

**-New You and New Us**

Now we are getting into the New You and the New Us.

You as his disciple are not alone. As we grow in Christ our personal relationship blossoms. As we allow for a new perspective of God and the unfathomable news He has, the process of a new you and a new us can start. If not for that perspective what other reason would we have to grow and develop in Christ our Lord.

In Colossians 2:6-15 Paul conveys that we can be alive in our risen Savior.

These verses read:

 6 Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, 7 rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, just as you were taught abounding in thanksgiving.

On to verse 13 where it reads:

 13 And you who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with Him having forgiven us all our trespasses, 14 by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This is He set it aside nailing it to the cross.

**The God of the universe set it aside?!?! Our trespasses… He set our trespasses aside?!?!** When we can accept that our sin is gone and that it is no longer a burden (cause Jesus paid it all) we can become even deeper rooted in Christ. If we can begin to understand the price he paid for us, accept it, and let it change you, great things will happen.

Let’s jump forward in Colossians a bit. How can the new you alive in our Lord help to further the Church, us? In Colossians 3:5-17 this letter instructs on new self as well as a new whole. In verse nine Paul says we as brothers and sisters in Christ should not lie to one another since we have displaced our old sinful ways. We should put on as stated in verses 12-14 compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, and above all love. Use these things not only out in the world, but also in our church body.

Three points can be observed to help in the process of a new you and a new us.

1. New life is with God (Go to God, He is always there)

2. Be honest with one another

a) Don’t go through this new life alone.

b) Find an accountability partner.

This isn’t just someone that you shoot the breeze with, although you can. You see I have an accountability partner, and when we get together we talk about our lives with each other I know he cares enough to help if I need it. We have gotten to know each other well enough. He would ask, “How are you doing?” and I would say, “Good,” and he would ask, “What’s good about it?” You see it was this challenging allowing me to share how I really felt especially when I was not doing so great. When we had troubles we would think of ways to help each other and spur one another on which leads into the next point which is:

c) Take the time to get on their level.

3. Get rid of the old

a) We lack the willingness to change, like a dog and his vomit.

We have this sin that is something we purposefully get rid of for a bit, but then for some reason we go back to it, just like a dog going back to his vomit.

If you can use these points and find the new you and use the new us to make sure you don’t go back to a dog like his vomit. Get an accountability partner that will keep tabs on you to make sure that you don’t go back to the sin and together you can move and grow into the new you and collectively a new us.

So we have: New God and New News

 New You and New Us

**-New Death and New Life**

Next we have New Death and New Life.

Those who are not saved will sometimes look at Christians and ask why you are foolish enough to believe in something that’s for children in Sunday school. I have had people actually ask me why I believe something so childish. What do you say? What if it is your friends who have not been saved? Are you willing to say what you really believe?

We have just looked into a new you and a new us. You, finding the newly found confidence to turn away from the past, may not be entirely sure of a foothold in your relationship with your Savior. So what do you do if someone discourages you for your practices of praying in front of co-workers, or reading a bible, or remembering through communion? Well Paul gives some guidance in Colossians 2:16-23.

Let’s start in 16:

16 Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. 17 These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. 18 Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, 19 and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.

That is encouraging that there is not an extensive procedure to become a child of Christ. We just come as we are leaving behind judgments of the world. This encouraging to think that we can come lay our sins at Christ’s feet and put them to death.

We often feel held back by the sin in our past life. We live our lives scared of someone judging us for sin we had in our life. Think about it like this: Jesus killed us when he died. Now people would be like whoa when they heard that. I was taken back thinking man this guy is crazy, but let me explain. Christ killed the old us and the sin we had on this earth when He died. He buried the old us with Him and when He rose the new us rose as well. This IS crazy, but so amazing. We don’t have to worry about the sin of this world in our past. **IT IS DEAD!!! IT IS DEAD!!!** All we have to do is accept it. **That’s crazy!!!**

I get lighter just thinking about it. This is what Paul is talking about in verse 20 of Colossians 2.

Verse 20 reads:

 20 If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations—

I think C.S. Lewis did an amazing job of explaining this concept in Mere Christianity where he says “Christ says "Give me All. I don't want so much of your time and so much of your money and so much of your work: I want You. I have not come to torment your natural self, but to kill it. No half measures are any good. I don't want to cut off a branch here and a branch there, I want to have the whole tree down. I don't want to drill the tooth, or crown it, or stop it, but to have it out. Hand over the whole natural self, all the desires you think are innocent as well as the ones you think are wicked-the whole outfit. I will give you a new self instead. In fact, I will give you Myself: my own will shall become yours."”

That is a picture that helps to describe the fact that our old self has died and that a new self is to come. After we are done with the old dead self we can start to live as a new self. This is sometimes where new Christians and those recommitting lives can get tripped up. This new life is not something you can just put on. You have to use the new nature your savior provides and elevate to a level of undomesticated passion. God will change our passion like our taste buds…it will take time.

As we continue in Colossians we see Paul start talking about our new life.

In 3:1-4 we hear:

 1 If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

This is so overwhelming to imagine what would happen if we all followed this passage. The outcome would change the world we live in. This saying that if we accept this awesome gift, and strive to be like Christ, thinking of lovely things, that Christ will put away our past and pull us to His right side in the realms of glory.

There is so much that can be done or that should be, but there will still be turbulent times, which is why we had talked about a new us. We need each other to build each other up in the work of Christ. We should all put Heaven’s agenda on our heart, soul, and will. We can find newness about us that is strange but yet wonderful. Eric Mason referred to them as heavenly realities.

1. New Identity
2. A deep sense of the love of God
3. Always feeling a sense of awkwardness in the world
4. God gives us the grace to connect the unconnectable

When I went to Challenge after the first few nights I knew I wanted to do something to make a difference for Christ, but then a verse was read that made me realize I just need to be patient. Verse 4 reads “when Christ (who is in your life) appears, you will appear with Him in glory.” Just let that sink in. We will be able to appear with Him in glory. That is …WOW. That Him is the God who holds all together and he allows us to appear with him in glory.

So we can begin or new lives in our new death and new life.

So far we have: New God and New News

 New You and New Us

 New Death and New Life

**-New Catalyst and New Mission**

Next we have new catalyst and new mission.

As we continue in Colossians we move onto the ending part of this letter. We know that Paul is a missionary and he has been referred to as one of the most radical writers of all time. You kind of expect Paul to go out with a bang encouraging the church to go out and minister to people all over the world like the end of Matthew does, but he doesn’t. Let’s go to 3:18 and through 4:1.

It elaborates:

 18 Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 19 Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. 20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. 21 Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. 22 Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. 23 Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. 25 For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.

 4:1 Masters, treat your bondservants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.

Wait what?!?! Where is the radical advice for the church? This is talking about being complacent and faithful not radical……………. Wait?!?! Maybe, just maybe, IT IS talking about radical people and ideals. Think of it like this: Faithfulness is the new radical. Say it with me: Faithfulness is the new radical. Now Paul is not saying “now no going out making disciples and helping people.” That is great for us to do, but you can make an incredible difference by loving those around you. Or donating time to help out. I know for a fact that faithfulness makes a difference. We have an entire church body that would not function if it weren’t for the faithful people who put their time, talents, and passion, for God. It has brought amazing things to this church body.

Go on mission trips and help out, but don’t stop your mission when you are at home. Our mission for Christ is 24/7. People wear jerseys of great sports stars. I want to wear the jerseys of those faithful people who are making a difference where they are…whose jersey do you want to wear?

Let us continue to the ending wishes of Paul in this letter in chapter 4:2-6.

These final instructions read:

 2 Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. 3 At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— 4 that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.

 5 Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. 6 Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

Paul wanted them to pray for opportunities to share God’s love and His word.

There are those places that say they are the home of some famous delectable food creation. Well I would say that one of those places, not necessarily proclaimed, but A&W and their coneys. For some it may be different, but once you have it you are filled with joy. It is just too good. Then you feel the need to take others there to have them try it and when you have guests from out of state you take them there to show them one awesome creation that makes Ashland different. Some may love it and find the same joy you did and go on to share it with others. Then there will be those who don’t like it, let alone love it.

The same can be said for Christ we have Him and once we get Him we find this joy that cannot be expressed. We need to take that love for Him and share it with others. Some may accept His love too, but there will be those who don’t want to or aren’t ready to. Paul wants us to pray for more opportunities to share whether they accept Christ right away or not.

Christ called Himself the one the Father had sent. Now the Father sends us. I want to do the Father’s will and live as a servant sent. We can’t just think that we are going to change the world. Living sent starts on our knees. Prayer is vital. We don’t want to run into a closed door. Pray for opportunities and God’s guidance. Living sent will then move to the way we live. Being a witness is not something you do to people, it is something you live. Then being a witness moves to our lips.

This is hard because we don’t want to say the wrong thing and we don’t want to make others hearts harder towards Christ. People hear Paul saying go out and witness. You have to live sent. If you try to witness unsent you will end up a Jesus jerk, joke, or a not ready. A jerk will tell people that they are going to Hell.

 Person: It’s hot in here…

 Witness: Not as hot as it is when you get to where you’re going.

You don’t want to do that. I wouldn’t respond to that real well. Then a Jesus joke would mess around with witnessing like a weatherman telling people a hurricane is coming through charades. It doesn’t work. They have an important message but it looks silly to the person receiving the message. Then there is the not ready who cares more about the friendships than the friends.

We can’t do that. We need to live sent starting on our knees, moving to our lives, and then onto our lips. We should be working and spreading our news for God’s glory. When I talk about witnessing or when someone talks to me they are not saying get out and save somebody. You don’t have to save anybody. Christ died for everyone he took the burden and he will save them, just like he has or can save you.

If we can look at Paul’s advisory instructions we will be able to see everything new. I am still awestruck every time I read these words thinking that God meant these for me. I want so badly to put them into action. I need the support…we need the support of each other to be the body of Christ. As we close with this last song let your heart open. Let God kill the old you. We have people on either side willing to pray with you. If you would like to be new, do it today. I have decided to be and look at everything new. How about you?