

I. Introduction

- A. Good morning church.
- B. I have good news for you today.
- C. I'm always pretty attuned to starting a New Year of preaching with an important theme... something that sets the tone for the coming year.
- D. The verse I'd like to start with today is this one:
 1. *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."* (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- E. I am praying that God will begin healing your thinking today. And along with that, I'm praying he will heal your believing too.
- F. I'm hoping that his can be a year of biblical thinking and therefore biblical believing about who Christ is to us, and about who we are in him.
- G. I'm hoping we can go deeper into the grace of God by growing deeper and stronger in our faith in God. Grace is God's part.
- H. Faith is our part.
 1. And Faith means believing that God truly is your father and that he is more loving, more gracious, more generous, more devoted, more compassionate, more present, more considerate, more beautiful, and more merciful than you ever thought before. Faith finds grace and says it is real.
 2. Faith looks to the unsearchable riches of Christ and says, "I am those things, and I have those things in Christ."
 - a) I am preaching and praying for greater faith in you this year.... Not because you gut it out, but because you are more convinced than ever before of the goodness and grace of God.
- I. If you are a Christian, you are "in Christ." This happened when you were saved. You were joined to Christ. God made you one with him. Every believer in Jesus has been placed into permanent Christ. You are in Christ.
- J. And if anyone is in Christ, you are a New Creation.

II. A New Creation

- A. What is this? Before you had Jesus in your life, you were all on your own. Just you.
- B. But when you got Jesus, you became you-plus-Christ. That's your new creation.
- C. That's you. That's who you are. You are You plus Jesus. I am Me plus Jesus.
- D. That makes every Christian something incredible. You are a new spiritual species. You are a new creation.
- E. This is truth. This is grace.
 - a) Tell your mind. Tell your heart. Tell your soul. Tell your psychology. Tell the little voices in your head that bring worry or fear... I am a new Creation in Christ.
 - b) That's the truth.
- F. And it's not just the truth on the day of your salvation, but every day too.
 1. Not just on your good days, but on your bad days too.
 2. And not just when you are holy and obedient to God, but on the days when you act in ways that are unholy, and even on days when you disobey God, you are a still, and always, and forever a new creation. His mercies are new every morning.
 - a) Do you believe that about yourself?
- G. Can you say it... **I AM A NEW CREATION!**
 1. **The more your heart hears the Grace of God, the stronger your faith becomes.**
- H. So tell your heart. Paul tells us that there are two parts to that new creation. He says...
 1. Old things are passed away. Behold all things have become new.
- I. I want to take those one at a time.

III. Old Things Are Passed Away

1. *"Then He said: 'A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living.'" (Luke 15:11-13)*
- B. The son's request is brutal.
- C. Actually, it's not a request. It's a command. His word "give" is an imperative verb. Give to me the portion of goods... He doesn't really say that, not exactly.
- D. Literally he says, "Give to me my share of your very being (*ousios*)..." He might as have said, Father, cut out your heart and give it to me. Dad drop dead.
- E. To underline that, Jesus says, "So the Father divided to them, his livelihood..." But when he says livelihood, the word literally means his life. His *bios*... the root word for biology.
- F. The Dad gives up his life. No, he doesn't die, but it probably feels like it.
- G. So here goes the son. And he you will see he is very successful.
 1. *"And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything."* (Luke 15:13-16)
- H. He is successful at spending more money than he has. He is successful at crossing boundaries. He is successful at getting strangers in bed with him. He is successful at pushing away everyone who cares about him. He is successful at self-destruction. He is successful at heaping shame on his own head — because a Jewish man would never work with swine. He is successful at being his own god. He is successful at partying. He is successful at all the heartbreak and unhappiness that comes from battering his heart against God's reality.

- I. Do you know anybody who is successful at all the wrong things?
 1. By the way, the flip side of the prodigal son is his older brother. He is successful too. He is successful at superiority and arrogance. He is successful at morality. He is successful at hard work and assuming the world owes him for it. He is successful at judging all the bad people. He is successful at missing his father's heart. He is successful complaining his father is unfair. He is successful at blinding himself to his own failures. He is successful at following all the rules and expecting all the blessings.
 - a) But with all this, he is still as far from his father's heart as is his prodigal brother out there in the far country.
 - J. Prodigal means excessive, and out of bounds, and both sons were prodigal... one at coloring outside the lines, and the other at coloring inside the lines like a finicky church lady with her hair-bun wound too tight.
 - K. So the Prodigal Son reaches rock bottom... and when he comes to his senses, he goes home. And when he comes home, His father makes yet another sacrifice.
 - L. His father runs to him. This time he puts his dignity on the altar, because a dignified man never ran in public.
 1. *"And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry."* (Luke 15:20-24)
 - M. The father was waiting for him. And if he went prodigal again the next day, the father would be waiting for him again, the next day.
 - N. And when the son shows up with a prepared speech, the father interrupts him. No groveling needed.
 - O. All the son had to do was come home, and his past was erased. Old things were passed away...
 1. Fully. Instantaneously. Permanently. Forever.
 - P. As often as you come to your father's arms, old things are passed away.
 1. He doesn't want a recitation of your misdeeds. He knows them, and he's already covered them all with the blood of Christ.
 2. He doesn't want groveling and self-punishment. That would mean the punishment of the Cross wasn't enough.
 3. He doesn't want guilt or shame. All of that was already added to the account of Christ, and paid in full.
 4. He doesn't even want what religious people call repentance. Just coming to him in faith is all that it takes.
 - a) Just whisper, "Father."
 - Q. When you first came to your father's arms — the day we call salvation — on that day, old things were passed away. And they stay passed away. Even if you do them again, old things are passed away. Even if you backslide, old things are passed away. Even if you relapse, old things are still passed away.
 - R. Which means...
 1. Everything that prodigal son was and did and said and felt while he was in the far country had already been washed away in the flood of Calvary's love.
 2. And so it is with you. And if you don't believe it, all I can say is, "What part of 'It is finished' do you not understand?"
 - S. It is so finished that you can say... I'm not who I used to be. The old me is dead.
 1. My sins are forgiven. My guilt is undone. My shame is gone. My embarrassments are erased. My mistakes are forgotten. My old nature is non-existent. My old self is buried. My old identity is dead. My rap sheet is removed. My memories are healed. My permanent records are deleted — they're not permanent any more. My task-masters are dethroned. My demons are dethroned. My enemies are disarmed. My traumas are dis-empowered. My deceptions are disabled. My far country is forgotten with me safely in the arms of my Father.
 - a) Truly, if anyone is in Christ, old things are passed away. Grace. Grace. Grace. Grace. GRACE.
 - T. I said I had good news for you today. Have you heard any yet? Anything encouraging? Anything uplifting?
 - U. How do you handle your uncomfortable past? How do you handle past failures? How do you handle the embarrassments and failures and shames we all feel about our past?
 1. Every time a voice in your head rubs your face in your past, you have rub your past in your faith.
 2. I am a new creation, old things are passed away. I believe. The grace of God has that covered. I believe.
 - V. The parable of the Prodigal Son is a revelation of the heart of Jesus for you.
 1. It's beautiful good news.
 - W. But we've only heard the first half of the good news.
 - X. Because the Word doesn't just tell us that old things have passed away. We also hear, behold all things have become new.
- IV. Behold All Things Have Become New
- A. *"But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry.'"* (Luke 15:22-23)
 - B. The father gave four gifts to his son, and all of them are rich in meaning... a robe, a ring, sandals, and a party.
 1. The Robe speaks of God's Righteousness (Isaiah 64:6, 61:10, 2 Corinthians 5:21)
 - a) Why the robe? Because how was he dressed when he was standing there? He was dressed in filthy rags.
 - b) The Bible says all our righteousness is as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). That's not an assessment of our sins, that's an assessment of our righteousness, our good stuff.
 - c) But when God makes you a new creation, God robes you in his own righteousness. Righteousness means goodness that is good enough for God.
 - (1) *"My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness..."* (Isaiah 61:10)
 - d) The Robe speaks of the righteousness of God. He trades your filthy rags for shimmering robes of his righteousness.

- e) All things have become new, and that includes your righteous standing before God.
- f) Picture that moment. As those servants drape that pure, clean robe over his filthy nasty shoulders, that prodigal son was no better than the thief on the Cross.
 - (1) No moral improvement. No good works. He hadn't conquered his sex addiction. He hadn't gotten victory over his immorality. No nothing.
 - (2) He's still got manure from unclean pigs all over his feet, and unclean pig slop on splattered all over his shirt.
- g) And the father clothes him with robes of righteousness... looks at him and says, "My child... you're just perfect. You are just so beautiful."
- h) Can you picture God saying that to you today? He does say that and he means it.
- i) You have a new righteousness, new name, new identity, new power, new history and new destiny.
- j) ...And put a ring on his hand...

2. The Ring speaks of authority. (Genesis 41:42)

- a) This is the ring of authority. It is the ring that allows him to cash the Father's checks. It is the ring that even allows him to give orders in the Father's name.
- b) And here the father gives this ring to his son who is still unwashed, unclean, and unimproved.
- c) That's not just grace, it's amazing grace.
- d) And I've got to believe that the son looked at that robe, and looked at that ring, and said...
 - (1) No way, Father. This makes no sense.
 - (a) But that's grace. Without the eyes of faith, grace never makes sense.
 - (2) I can't believe this Father. I'm sure you don't mean it.
 - (a) But that's grace. When you really understand it, you feel it's too good to be true...
 - (3) I'm sure the son said, "But Father, I'm sure this ring is just symbolic, and I still have to get a green light from you before I use your authority..."
 - (a) But the Father would say, "I have given you dominion, I have lavished on you the abundance of grace, I have bestowed upon you the perfect righteousness of Christ... I have seated you with him on a heavenly throne... I gave YOU this authority and this reign and this dominion.... I put you behind the wheel, now drive. Let's go!"
 - i) *"...Those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ."* (Romans 5:17)
- e) With the robe, he has a new righteousness. With the ring, he has a new authority. All things have become new. And then the Father says, Put sandals on his feet....

3. The Sandals speak of Provision and Perfection.

- a) Under Law, Moses encounters God at the burning bush, and God says, "Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground." (Exodus 3:5)
- b) Under Grace, the sinner encounters the Father, and the Father says, "I will draw near to you. Put the sandals on your feet, for you are qualified to stand on holy ground, and in my holy presence, once for all." (Colossians 1:12)
 - (1) Is this ground where the Father embraces the prodigal any less holy than where God met Moses? And yet the Father puts sandals on his feet.
- c) When you came to God, he actually ran to you. And that muck and mire of the streets of life, that dirt and pain of the Giant Pain Machine, was still all over your torn up feet.
- d) So God commanded his angels to put on your feet the most comfortable and beautiful shoes you've ever worn... he calls it "the preparation of the gospel of peace." (Romans 10:15, Ephesians 6:15)
- e) But more than that perfection and more than that qualification to stand in the holy presence of God, the sandals also indicate provision. God provides.
 - (1) *"And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."* (Philippians 4:19)
 - (2) *"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."* (Matthew 6:31-33)
- f) God told Joshua he would make his way prosperous.
- g) God told David everything he did would prosper.
- h) The Apostle John prayed, "Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers." (3 John 1:2)
- i) God cares about your provision. God cares about your income. God cares about your prosperity. God cares about your generosity. All of which is because God cares about you. He is a father, and he will provide.
- j) Jesus taught us to pray for daily bread. That means income. That means a paycheck. (See Matthew 7:8-10)
- k) And when he had the Father put sandals on the prodigal son's feet, he was telling you and me and everyone with ears to hear, that your Father is Jehovah Jireh, the Lord Who Provides. (Genesis 22:14)
 - (1) You are a new creation. Old things are passed away.
 - (a) Behold, all things have become new.
 - (2) The son got a robe, which speaks of a new righteousness. He got a ring, which speaks of new authority. He got sandals, which speak of new provision and perfection. And then he got a party... "let us eat and be merry."
- l) It was a loud, fun, expensive, raucous, delicious barbecue dance party.

4. The Party speaks of Abundance.

- a) *"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly [perissos]."* (John 10:10)
 - (1) Abundantly is the Greek word *perrisos* — it means surplus.
 - (2) More than enough. The father didn't just give the prodigal a hug and say, "Welcome home, kid." That would have been enough. But "enough" never describes Jesus and his love.
- b) Romans 5:17 says that every Christian has received grace. But it doesn't just say grace. It says an abundance of grace, *perissos*, more than enough.
- c) And Romans 5:20 says that where sin abounded, grace abounded much more... *hyper-perissos*.
- d) You are a child of God. He doesn't want you limping through life. He doesn't want you bored, boring, listless, and half alive.
- e) Jesus came, lived, died, and rose again so you may have life and have it more abundantly. Christians are different.
 - (1) There's a joy there. A purpose and meaning. You know your place in the vastness of this world, because your place is to share the glory of Christ.
- f) The New Creation gives you a spark of life you never had before.
 - (1) It gives you a confidence anchored in heaven.
 - (a) This is something more than you can get from Tim Ferriss, Tony Robbins, Oprah, Jordan Peterson, TED talks, Babish, and Khan Academy combined.
 - (b) They can never rise above planet earth.
 - (2) But the new creation is your pipeline to heaven. Here is your transcendence. Here is your door to wonder.
- g) Your new creation gives you a supernatural pipeline to never ending flow of grace... for victory and peace in every need and every opportunity and every struggle of every day of your life on earth.
 - (1) If you would only have faith in the abundance, and the provision, and the perfection, and the authority, and the righteousness that the father has lavished up on you.
 - (a) **The abundance of God's GRACE is your secret weapon to THRIVE in the face of the Giant Pain Machine...**
- h) I said that I am praying this is a year of greater faith, in a greater God of greater grace.
 - (1) When grace grows in our hearing, faith grows in our hearts.
 - (2) When grace grows in our speaking, faith grows even faster in our hearts.
- i) And one more thing... That would be the fattened calf that makes it all possible.

5. The Fattened Calf speaks of the Finished Work of Christ on Calvary

- a) The fattened calf was different than all the other calves in the herd. This one was specially selected early on. It was taken from the pasture, and penned near the home. The other cattle grazed on grass. This one was hand fed grains. Why?
- b) Because it was ordained to die. And it was prepared so that the food it provided would be the highest possible quality. USDA Prime Plus.
- c) The fattened calf is Christ. The fattened calf was slaughtered for you.
 - (1) *"For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."* (Romans 5:6)
- d) Jesus gave himself willingly. He did it joyfully. He did it totally because he loves you.
- e) His death made the celestial party possible.
- f) And through his cross and his resurrection, there's one more thing I want to say.

V. Birthright

- A. The father gave his prodigal child a robe, a ring, sandals, and a party all courtesy of the fattened calf.
 1. **Question: when did those things start belonging to that son?**
 2. **Answer: they were always his as his Father's son.**
 - a) When he first insulted his father, they were already his.
 - b) When he went off to the far country, the birthright was already his.
 - c) When he partied himself into unconsciousness night after night, these blessings were still his.
 - d) When he defiled himself with swine, they were his.
 3. The riches of grace were his, simply by virtue of being his father's son. The tragedy was the time he wasted not enjoying his Father's love. All he did was to come home, because that was the only place he could experience the birthright that already belonged to him.
 4. The riches of grace are already yours, simply by virtue of you being the Father's daughter or son.
 - a) That's exactly what he told the self-righteous older brother when he accused his father of being cheap. (Luke 15:31: "all that I have is already yours.")
- B. Christian... I have good news for you today.
 1. **The riches of Christ are your birthright. Grace**
- C. They have been since you were saved... and they will be through all the epochs of the ages of eternity.
- D. St Paul said it was his mission to preach to God's people the unsearchable riches of Christ. (Ephesians 3:8)
- E. Just so you know, I take that my mission too.
 1. *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."* (2 Corinthians 5:17)