

Newly Created in Christ

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[0 : 0 0] Well, I've got a bit of nostalgia for us this morning. If you're under 30, you might not know what I'm talking about. But who remembers the wonderful game show, Stars in Their Eyes?

And who remembers what the catchphrase was? Anybody? That's it. Tonight, Matthew, I'm going to be. That's right. And it was classic television.

We all tuned in for it. So I have to tell you something here. I never copped on that it was not a live program. It never worked out. They disappeared and came back.

How on earth did that happen? So anyway, there was a massive transformation there. A singing show that they all took part in. And then I think they used to have sort of whoever got through at the end went through to like a special final at Christmas time.

So there is a link to this talk, okay? Just so that we'll see. So our topic this morning is, in Christ, I'm a new creation. And we're thinking about Stars in Their Eyes.

[1 : 0 7] And I think that sometimes, as Christians, we can think that the Christian faith is a bit like Stars in Their Eyes. We can think that when we become a Christian, we end up acting and looking a bit different.

But deep down, we're still that same person that we were before. But I want to put a different view across this morning and to say that actually, when we are Christians, when we become Christians, we actually knew creations.

So I've got two simple points this morning. The before and the after. So let's just pray before I start. Lord, we thank you so much for what you've been doing in and through our lives.

And I thank you so much for when we see transformation in people's lives around us. Please speak to our hearts this morning so we'd hear from your word and it would challenge us.

And it would help us to grasp what it really means to be a new creation. Amen. So if we continue on with the analogy of Stars in Their Eyes, let's think a moment about the before.

[2 : 1 8] The before the time when the person goes into the big silvery doors. The passage that we've just heard says, the old life is gone. But what is the old life?

What is so bad about the natural human condition that we need to be reborn? If you're here and you're a Christian already, let's make this personal.

Not to share with anybody else, but think. What did God reveal to you about yourself and about that of your life that you needed to throw out the old life and choose a new life with God?

What was it? And what is it really about the human condition? It's not that we're all doing terrible things beforehand. But the fact is that generally speaking, as people, we live naturally to please ourselves.

We have a huge focus on the I. What I can do. If I work hard, I'm going to achieve this. If I study hard, I will achieve this.

[3 : 21] If I save upon my money, I can buy this. And we spend our time trying to be successful as we can. To maybe become as important or as liked or as rich as we can.

And that's what generally happens in the world. But what happens when you make it, when you reach that ultimate success? Well, in my experience, we want more.

We're never satisfied. And we keep looking for the next thing that's going to make life worth living, no matter what the cost. A quote from Jim Carrey, one of my favourite comedy actors from Liar, Liar and Bruce Almighty.

And he says, I hope everybody could get rich and famous and will have everything they dreamed of so they will know that it's not the answer. So all this striving, it leads us nowhere.

And if as people, all we do is strive to be successful or get as much as we can or to be perfectly loved by another person, I think we're going to eventually realise that those things can't or won't deliver.

[4 : 29] Chasing after them is actually exhausting. And it sucks away joy and happiness. And we feel that there's much more to life. And we realise that something or someone is missing.

That, I would suggest, is God. We've got a God-shaped hole inside of us. Because if you're going to only live for yourself, you're going to end up really disappointed.

So I think the passage that Marilyn read is saying something else to us. It's saying that when we accept Jesus, when we are born again, we're alive to God. We're no longer living to please ourselves.

Our life takes on a whole new meaning. And our life is no longer about pleasing us, but about pleasing Christ. And he is the only one, actually, that can bring us real value, security, purpose, and a love that changes everything.

I'm sure all of you here know and feel the pressure to perform. It's all around us. It's thrown at us every day. For the older members of us, maybe we want to put our lives on social media, on Facebook.

[5 : 42] For younger people, they want to portray that they're having a most successful life. They're in a great job. They've got a great relationship. Great holidays. And actually, to validate themselves, they need to see how many likes they've got.

But life without Christ is a constant battle. And this is something that I found in my own life when I was younger. You know, often all we want to do is finish school and college, then maybe go to uni.

Then when we've achieved that, get a job. Then we want to get a car. Then we want to get a better car. And then we want to buy a house. Then we want to buy a bigger house. We can always think and be striving to the next thing.

But you know, I found that whatever we get, the likelihood is that we're not going to be satisfied. Because I've said before, if we're just focusing on ourselves, we'll always have this pressure to perform.

But if our focus is on God and pleasing Him, then that pressure is relieved. And He's going to satisfy us completely and eternally. And if you're sitting here this morning and you're not a Christian, and you're wondering who this Jesus is that I'm going on about, well, Jesus is a treasure that He wants you to find.

[6 : 59] In the Bible, I love the character Peter. There's lots of stuff about him in the Bible. And he was one of Jesus' best friends. And I can really relate to Peter well, because he messes up on lots of occasions, as I do.

Sometimes he says really stupid stuff. And sometimes he does completely ridiculous things. But Jesus calls Peter and invited him into an amazing adventure.

Why did he do that? He did that because Peter chose to live his life for Christ and not for himself. Peter was called on that amazing adventure because he was living for Christ.

And when we do that, it changes everything. Because God is always a God of second chances. And He deliberately chooses the most unlikely of people.

So if you're here this morning and you feel a bit sick and tired of striving for something, always trying to achieve something, and maybe feeling like you're messing up again and again, I want to offer you a different way of life.

[8 : 03] Choose to live for someone else. Choose to live for Jesus. So this is a really simple message this morning. But I think this is the basic and the essence of the Christian faith.

Before we have Jesus, we've got striving towards an unachievable goal that we're never going to get there, focusing on ourselves. But with Jesus, we get offered something completely different.

In Galatians 5, verse 1, it says, In other words, enjoy freedom.

Before we move on to look at the after, I just want to go back once more to the stars in their eyes analogy for a second time. Because as I said earlier, people look at the Christian faith, where you have a little bit of a transformation, but deep down, you're still the same person that you were before.

But the Bible doesn't say that. Yes, we're still going to make mistakes because we're all human. But it says when you become a Christian, when you are in Christ, you are a new creation, a totally new life, a totally new you, with a new identity.

[9 : 19] Because you have had an encounter with Jesus, and you've been reborn into a new family, the family of God, and you are precious to him. You're his son or his daughter.

So that's before. So let's look at the after. Sorry. So the glorious news that we need to remember about the after is that we can confidently say that when we are in Christ, we are new creations joined in Christ.

Another passage, Colossians 31 says, Set your heart on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

That line, your life is now hidden with Christ in God. What he's saying here is when God looks upon you as a believer, as one that trusts in Jesus and follows Jesus, he sees you in all of the righteousness and purity and beauty of Jesus.

Not because of who you are or what you've done, but because of what he's done. And as we love and start to follow Jesus, we gradually begin to look and act more like him.

[10 : 36] And that's why the early church started calling each other Christians. It started as a bit of a mickey-take, a derogatory word for them, used by others, but it stuck because it was true.

And as Christians, we literally reflect Jesus. As new creations, we become more like Christ. One more example from the Bible is Romans 6, verses 5, where it says, For we have been united with him, Jesus in a death like this.

We will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like this. So we are united with him. And the word united is taken from a gardening term, apparently, which means engrafted at the root.

Now, I am a terrible gardener. We have a few plants and herbs in our garden that Jeff takes care of. But what I do know is that roots are really important. The root of the plant is where the plant gets its food from and its life from.

And that is what righteousness is about, being joined in Christ. Another thing to remember about this after transformation is that when we are made righteous, we are joined in Christ to become part of him.

[11 : 48] It's not because of anything that we've done, but because of what God's done. Our salvation and our security are the result of God taking the initiative. He, not us, makes us righteous.

This is a result of Jesus' sacrifice for us. And it all comes from God because he made a new creation. We no longer have to be defined by our old life because we've been defined by Jesus.

The determining factor in your relationship with God is no longer your past, but it's Christ's past. Unfortunately, often one of the barriers people have to accepting Jesus is not feeling good enough, not feeling deserving of this amazing gift.

I know that because I felt the same thing before I was a Christian. I thought, how could someone like me, that was so mixed up, angry, confused, and bad-tempered, quite frankly, could be good enough to be loved by God?

And if you're feeling like that this morning, you need to hear this. The Father loves you and accepts you and delights in you. He sees you as having all the beauty and the greatness and glory of a son, Jesus, when you are in Christ.

[13 : 05] So will you start seeing yourself in that same light? Will you start feeling condemned? Because that's not you anymore. That's not how God sees you.

When you're in Christ, he sees Jesus in you. You don't need to worry about not feeling good enough or feel like you haven't done enough to earn this free gift because God doesn't expect that from you.

Andrew Wilson, a Christian author, says, Because of Christ, you just need to choose to turn away from your old life and enjoy this new free gift and walk into this new life.

As I end, I've got a quick analogy to explain what this might look like. So I'm going to paraphrase, probably quite badly, from the book of Mere Christianity by C.S. Lewis, the famous author who also wrote all the Narnia books.

And he talks about the change that God makes in our lives as being a house that's been renovated. Maybe you've seen the house across the road.

[14 : 40] I came here in 2020 when a young couple had bought a house over there that I think was beautiful but it was dilapidated. And I found it really interesting every week to walk by and have a look and think, Ooh, what are they doing now?

And gradually it's getting to be a beautiful house. So imagine yourself as a tiny and dilapidated house with damp, rotten windows, wallpaper peeling off the walls and no central heating.

A bit like those houses that we see on another fantastic program, Homes Under the Hammer. Before, obviously. And God decides that he's going to move in and make some renovations to your house.

So he starts, first of all, to make some small changes. He starts lifting up the carpet, taking a bit of wallpaper off and then he starts to make some bigger changes. He starts knocking the walls down, adding some extra rooms and some floors.

And then you start to realise what God is doing. Because you know what? He's not remaking your own little house but he's making a palace that's fit for a king.

[15 : 47] He's creating a home for him to live in. And that is what it's like when we are in Christ. When we become new creations, God does more than we can ever ask or imagine.

And that is the beauty of the Gospel. He wants your life to declare the glory and majesty of his life. So today, you might have come here for the first time with a friend or to see what church is all about.

Or you might have been coming for a few weeks and you want to know more about the Christian faith. You might already be a Christian here and you might just think, actually I want to go deeper in my discipleship. So if that's you, I want to challenge you and encourage you to explore God and see what God can do to make a change in your life.

To be expectant and have huge expectations about what God can do in your life. So here at Christ Church, we run two things that help with that. The first thing is a course called Any Questions, which is coming up in June.

And we have some little flyers at the back about that called Got Questions. And also, I'm always going on about this, the Alpha course, which will be starting in September. And that's a really good place to connect with God, deepen our faith and connect with other people.

[17 : 02] So if you've been challenged this morning to know God more, I'd encourage both of you to come along to these. So please speak to me or Clive or anybody on the host team later. So finally, let's just pray as I finish.

Lord, we all come here today with different things going on and different experiences with stuff from our past. And some of us may be feeling a bit broken and bruised.

But Lord, we want you to come in and transform our lives. So maybe just now in the quiet, think through what do you need Jesus to work in you and through you today so that you might be living as a new creation in Christ.

So just speak to him now in the silence. And let's remember these words.

If anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation. The old things have passed away. Behold, the new things have come. And all these things are from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ.

[18 : 23] So dear Lord, thank you that we are new creations. In your son Christ Jesus, thank you that you create in us a clean heart and that you renew a steadfast spirit within us.

Thank you that we can all start over again with you, completely new, reconciled, forgiven and justified. And help us to stay on your path, to know each day and every day that we are new creations.

Through grace in Jesus Christ, in Jesus' name. Amen.