

## ChChChChChChanges

[Galatians 1:11-24](#), [Luke 7:11-17](#)

Life can change in the blink of an eye. If you don't like the weather, wait an hour. The only constant in life is change. I am sure you can come up with many other clichés concerning change. Sometimes change is painful – maybe we feel a loss of something valuable all in the name of progress. Other times change is exciting – maybe something is transformed forever and the results are remarkable. Think of the changes in your life, both good and bad. At times we may think something is a change for the worse only to have great value come from it.

I believe it was originally assumed that there could only be so many cars manufactured because there would be a limited number of chauffeurs to drive them. Many of the advances in human medicine were originally thought impossible or way too dangerous to attempt, yet lives are now being saved that would

never have survived before these advances. The idea of using poisons to eradicate cancer seemed absurd at first, yet many are living productive cancer-free lives. God was a part of these developments. God gave us intellect and knowledge and many use these gifts to help better the lives of others.

Today's scripture lessons speak directly to the aspect of change. For Paul, his change was radical. As a good young Pharisee he was determined to destroy the uprising of Christianity. Paul was a dedicated persecutor of Christians. He told the church in Galatia that he was 'violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it.' Paul noted how zealous he was as a good Jew. Zealous means to be filled with or inspired by intense enthusiasm. I wanted to share some pictures of some fairly zealous sports fans just to give you a taste for the difference between a sports fan and a zealous sports

fan. [slides] I hope you can see the difference from mere fans to zealous fans. The same goes for someone like Paul. He wasn't just content to be a good Jew – he was zealous in his adherence to Jewish law, and highly motivated to wipe out any Christian threat to his way of life. It is interesting that after Paul's conversion, his zeal remained with him. He became an ardent witness to the Gentiles, traveling extensively to share the good news of the risen Christ and the hope and assurance that Christ died for all and that salvation was not limited to the Jews.

Jesus was a master of instituting change in people's lives. Because of his concern for the poor and outcasts, his message of love and his compassion for those who were on the outskirts of society often involved measures to help include them in the daily life of the community. Our passage in Luke describes a story of a healing where Jesus once again brought life to

someone who had died. In this case it was a widow's only son. As she is a widow, clearly her husband was dead. In Jesus' time, widows were in a particularly vulnerable and dangerous state. They needed a male patron to care for them as they were not assumed to be a part of the community without a male counterpart. They often could not return to their father's households when their husbands died; hence they would need to turn to a brother or an uncle or some other household with a male head. Otherwise; there was no way for them to earn an income and would therefore need to rely on the church or the kindness of others to survive.

The church at this time was not doing a very good job of caring for its outcasts. What had changed over time was a focus on Jewish food laws and cleanliness laws while putting aside the charge to care for the widows, orphans and poor among them.

This was clearly not a change for the good. Church leaders were even recommending what is known as ‘corban.’ What typically happened would be this: As conquered Roman citizens, Jews were required to pay their taxes or die. The Temple required tithes, yet with only so much money, often citizens would choose to risk being shunned by the church than killed by the Romans. Church leaders would then instruct them to take whatever money they would use to support their aged parents and give that money to the Temple. The whole principle of ‘honor thy father and mother’ was not seen as very important – a change for the worse.

Jesus came into the town of Nain with a large crowd following him. He had just come from Capernaum where he had healed a centurion’s servant by simply uttering the word. Jesus found a faith in this centurion unlike any He had seen so

far. Luke 7:6 says, “Lord, don’t trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed.” Jesus was even amazed at this man’s faith for here was clearly a change for the better – a Gentile leader was recognizing the power of God in the person of Jesus Christ.

Jesus’ fame continued to grow as a large crowd was accompanying him to Nain when he met another large crowd mourning the loss of a widow’s only son. But Jesus seemed to see beyond the scene of grief to the despair of this widow’s future. For all intents and purposes she was dead as well seeing as there was no one left to care for her. When Jesus saw her he had compassion on her for the loss of her son and the impending predicament in which she would find herself. Jesus, the ultimate

agent of change, reversed the fate of this woman, spoke to her dead son and said, “Young man, I say to you, get up!” At this point, the dead man rose, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. This was most definitely a change for the better.

What changes have you witnessed in your life? What about the changes to the community here at Mount Tabor? Some changes are difficult yet in the end they bring us closer to each other and closer to God. Many churches have issues with change. We all see the changes to Sundays as not necessarily good. Many can remember when no businesses were opened on Sunday. Blue laws were strictly enforced until very recently. Attending church had a prominent place on the family schedule and the business world agreed. Things are not so today. Attending services is squeezed in between sports practices and games, and pretty much every business is open on Sundays.

We may not see these changes as positive. Many of us would probably be much happier if things had stayed the same. The question is this: how is the church adapting to changes in our community? Are we able to progress along with our neighbors? We have modernized our facilities to adapt to change. We now have indoor plumbing, heating and air conditioning in the sanctuary, internet access in the office, and a sound system. We have modernized our thinking by looking at ways to relate current events and situations to Biblical principles that are still vital for our lives. We are able to communicate at a whole new level, for better or worse. Our reach can go beyond our sanctuary to those who cannot come to our services for various reasons. We have opened our hearts, minds and doors to new generations, because even in the midst of the busyness of our lives, and the constant saturation of media on all of us, we

can still connect with God and each other in the sanctity of this place and this group of Christian believers.

What can we learn from change? First, change is inevitable. Our world is not stagnant but constantly adapting and we as a church need to adapt as well. Second, change can challenge us in many ways. How we handle changes to our environment will determine whether or not those changes are for the good. We may not like everything about our changing environment, but we as a church need to be able to respond to those changes, discerning what God's will is for us. And third, we can face the changes in our lives with the assurance of a God who is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Today we celebrate communion as we have done since Jesus taught us to do so. We remember Christ's sacrifice for the church as we celebrate the resurrection and our assurance as

children of God. I invite you to spend time in prayer today as we partake of the Holy Communion meal together. Pray that in the midst of constant change we can be effective, zealous witnesses to the love of Christ in all we say, all we do, and all we are together as this body of Christ. Prayer changes things – it always has and it always will. Amen.