

**Call to Worship** Ezek. 35:23-27; Romans 6:4; 2 Corin. 5:17; 1 Peter:23

When I make myself holy among you..., I will take you from the nations, I will gather you from all the countries, and I will bring you to your own fertile land. **I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be cleansed of all your pollution. I will cleanse you of all your idols.**

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you. I will remove your stony heart from your body and replace it with a living one, and I will give you my spirit... **Therefore, we were buried together with him through baptism into his death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too can walk in newness of life.**

So then, if anyone is in Christ, that person is part of the new creation. The old things have gone away, and look, new things have arrived! **Do this because you have been given new birth—not from the type of seed that decays but from seed that doesn't. This seed is God's life-giving and enduring word.**

**Prayer of Invocation**

**Be found walking with us in this hour, O God, as we wonder about our lives and your truth, your inspiration as we contemplate the next days, and as the one who never condemns us in our questioning and weakness. Be with us now, Holy Spirit of Christ, Holy Spirit of God. Amen.**

**The Word**

John 3:1-9

There was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a Jewish leader. **He came to Jesus at night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one could do these miraculous signs that you do unless God is with him."**

Jesus answered, "I assure you, unless someone is born anew. it's not possible to see God's kingdom." **Nicodemus asked, "How is it possible for an adult to be born? It's impossible to enter the mother's womb for a second time and be born, isn't it?"**

Jesus answered, "I assure you, unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, it's not possible to enter God's kingdom. Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh, and whatever is born of the Spirit is spirit. Don't be surprised that I said to you, 'You must be born anew.' God's Spirit blows wherever it wishes. You hear its sound, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going. It's the same with everyone who is born of the Spirit." **Nicodemus said, "How are these things possible?"**

**Living the Word**

Our home in Hayward doesn't have air conditioning, so as it warms up each Spring, we sleep with the windows open to the screens to catch any cool breezes. One night every year, I get caught off guard, awakening to the sound of multiple babies crying. It is like twins or triplets crying for their mother.

It always takes me a bit of listening and remembering to realize that the sound is new life of the coyotes. On the farm, we learn that coyotes are not really our friends and I have seen a few mangy ones, not a pretty sight. But after I identify the sound, I always rest in the thought that God is still Creating and re-creating.

We revel in the new life that we experience around us...What a great idea God, that animals would start out small and cute and then grow to be respected in their gifts to the world...In many cases we learn to love them before we fear them.

### **What are some of the blessings of New Life that you have experienced?**

New life takes time to prepare for – before we plant the fields and the garden, soon to be filled with new life, we need to assemble a place, tools and seeds. Then we plant and we wait.

Part of the joy of new life is the anticipation of the actual birth. Gestation of a human baby is about 9 months. Good thing too, for this new life event changes the lives of everyone around or related to it.

Last weekend, I was with my family and saw the small, slowly growing, baby bump on my niece Katelynn. Her first, and she and Eric are so cute as they share that the nursery room is ready and they can now begin to buy the clothes and diapers.

My brother Randy is excited to be a grandpa!

Babies: smaller versions of us. Even at age two – a toddler-human can appreciate the smallness of a new born and say 'baby.' I am always fascinated by the little fingernails. They are assurance for me that there really is a Creator God, how else could that be real? What other way could that be possible?

My morning devotional, just before I sat to work on this sermon was this: Based on Colossians 1:16 which says: "*Through God's power all things were made – things in heaven and on earth, things seen and unseen.*" God's Mighty Hand – With one decision - history began. Existence became measurable.

"Out of nothing came light. Out of light came day. Then came sky...and earth. And on this earth? A mighty hand went to work. Canyons were carved. Oceans were dug. Mountains erupted out of flatlands.

Stars were flung. A universe sparkled. Look to the canyons to see the Creator's splendor. Touch the flowers and see his delicacy. Listen to the thunder and hear God's power.

Today you will encounter God's creation. When you see the beauty around you, let each detail remind you to lift your head in praise. Express your appreciation for God's creation. Encourage others to see the beauty of God's creation."

This writing of Max Lucado is a blessing to me. I need the reminders each morning of the blessings God has given me...how about you? Some people wait until the blessings become regrets because they didn't take the time to see new life and missed it completely...

Others know how much work being a part of new life involves and they avoid planting and feeding and caring for new life.

It is a lot of work and takes a lot of energy and rest for the new life to grow as well to be cared for...a new born baby needs sleep, 16 hours out of every 24. Even Oliver, at age 5 still needs, still needs 10 out of 24 hours. I know I need 8 hours in order to still generate some new life in me each day...

Join me in sharing some thanksgiving – say it with me:

**“Praise God for the Blessings of New Life”**

God’s re-creation is what comes as new life after the initial creation. We know how a wound; even life-threatening wounds can heal to give new life. Just as God is always creating, God is also always re-creating. This is very good news for us as humans as we have a tendency to hurt, break and abuse life as broken humans.

After cancer began to overtake her brain and her body, they tried advanced surgeries, extreme radiation, numerous kinds of chemo therapies and the prognosis was not good. Even so, the doctors had more they were willing to try.

Yet the decision was made by my brother Dan and his wife Terri, that it had been enough and they would now live each moment left to her – not speaking of death, but life; positively, with all trust in God.

The doctors said she might have hours, days or a couple weeks, yet she lived blanketed in prayers and facing whatever was ahead, with a joy for her family and her future with the Lord. She lived for three more months yet near the end, she yearned to be re-created into a new life.

The week before she died, she told that she wouldn’t be at the gate to meet me when I get to heaven, as her plan was to be praising God for 10,000 years first when she got there. Then she recalled the hymn “O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing My Great Redeemers Praise”

While we are still alive on this earth, even as our bodies crumble and falter, even when our hearts and minds crack and stumble, yet we are given re-creation - new life in Christ.

This is what Jesus was trying to tell Nikodemus that night. There is so much more to new life than just the things and even the people around us. Jesus, gives us that same message. Like the babies that have to grow into understanding and believing, of everything around them, so do we. Yet it begins with trust and then faith and then the knowledge of the value of the new life we can experience through scripture and faith – ever guided by the Holy Spirit.

We are given the opportunity to be reminded of this in many ways – including Holy Communion. The Apostle Paul wrote this in the first letter to the Corinthians (11:23-25)

*"I received a tradition from the Lord, which I also handed on to you: on the night on which he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread. After giving thanks, he broke it and said,*

*"This is my body, which is for you; do this to remember me." He did the same thing with the cup, after they had eaten, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Every time you drink it, do this to remember me."*

A new covenant through Christ. We are recreated for new life and purpose every time we offer ourselves in the receiving of Christ gift of new life for us. This new life also takes work and rest, but it is more fulfilling than going without.

**“Praise God for the Blessings of New Life”**

Even an old building can find new life in the attendance to and work of its care takers! Changes and decay eventually comes for all of us as well.

Ecclesiastes 1:1-4, 9-11 says this: "*The words of the Teacher of the Assembly, David's son, king in Jerusalem: Perfectly pointless, says the Teacher, perfectly pointless. Everything is pointless.*

*Whatever has happened—that's what will happen again; whatever has occurred—that's what will occur again. What do people gain from all the hard work that they work so hard at under the sun? A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains as it always has.*

*There's nothing new under the sun. People may say about something: "Look at this! It's new!" But it was already around for ages before us. There's no remembrance of things in the past, nor of things to come in the future. Neither will there be any remembrance among those who come along in the future."*

"*Nothing new under the sun.*" We all heard that from time to time.

But who put this in the Bible and what were they really saying? It was David's son Solomon – wise Solomon. He shows that all human things are vain and that isn't new and hasn't changed through time.

We here behold Solomon returning from the broken and empty cisterns of the world, to the Fountain of living water; recording his own folly and shame, the bitterness of his disappointment, and the lessons he had learned.

Those that have taken warning to turn and live, and should warn others not to go on and die. He does not merely say all things are vain, but that they are vanity.

If this world, in its present state, were all there was for us, it would not be worth living for; and the wealth and pleasure of this world, even if we had so much, are not enough to make us happy.

What profit has a man of all his labor? All he gets by it will not supply the wants of the soul, nor satisfy its desires; will not atone for the sins of the soul, nor hinder the loss of it: what profit will the wealth of the world be to the soul in death, in judgment, or in the everlasting state?

People's hearts and their corruptions are the same now as in former times; their desires, and pursuits, and complaints, still the same.

This should take us from expecting happiness in this life, and motivate us to seek eternal blessings. How many buildings and things and persons in Solomon's day were thought very great, yet there is no remembrance of them now!

Even so, we are given the blessings of this life in anticipation for another new life beyond this one. New life from death. New life in which our soul, pour inner being, will once again be whole, and with our Creator. The blessings never end through knowing our Creator and all that God has available to us.

**"Praise God for the Blessings of New Life"**