Why Resolutions Fail and What to Do Instead January 1, 2023

*John 3:1-15 Guest Speaker: Christian Clement-Schlimm*

There must be a divine operation; call it a miraculous operation – Charles Spurgeon

Intro: Why New Year’s Resolutions Fail

1. We all need to change

a. Nicodemus seemed to have everything going for him

v. 1 *Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.*

Matthew 5:20 *For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.*

b. Nicodemus still struggled and turned to Jesus for help

v. 2 *This man came to Jesus by night*

John 11:10 *But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.*

v. 2 *Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.*

John 2:11 *This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory.*

c.Nicodemus needed to seek the kingdom of God

* v. 3 *Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”*
* Matthew 4:17 *From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”*
* Romans 14:17 *For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*
* Have you ever struggled with a New Year’s resolution? What made it so difficult to follow through on?
* Why is it essential to change mentalities and not just behaviors?
* Why is turning to Jesus the right response when we recognize our need for help and change? What makes him so special?

1. We can’t change ourselves
2. Jesus explained that Nicodemus must be spiritually born again

v. 4 *Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?*

v. 5 *Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”*

John 4:10 *“If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.”*

Ezekiel 36:25 *I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses*

1. According to Jesus, it is God who makes people born again

v. 6 *That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*

vv. 7-8 *Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”*

John 6:65 *And he said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.”*

1 Corinthians 2:14 *The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him*

* What does it mean to be “born again”? How is the “new birth” connected to the “kingdom of God”?
* Have you been born again? How do you know?
* Why is important to know that the new birth comes from God?

1. We must embrace the change only God can bring
2. Nicodemus still struggled with Jesus’ teaching

v. 9 *Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?”*

vv. 10-11 *Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony.*

1. Jesus explained that a response of faith is essential

v. 12 *If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?*

v. 13 *No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.*

vv. 14-15 *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.*

Matthew 10:32 *So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven*

* Despite knowing Jesus’ character and authority, why do Christians still struggle with his teaching?
* Why does Jesus call for total trust and complete submission? What are the benefits of living a life of faith?
* How does sharing your faith help you deepen your commitment to change?

Study ahead: Next week, we’ll study Acts 5:12-26

Notes