

"New Attitudes for the New Year - Be Free

John 8:31-36 and 2 Cor. 3:17

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Can you believe it is already the end of January? How does the saying go - "Time flies when you're having fun!" Seems like just a few days ago - we ushered in a new year and already we are a month into this new year.

So, what's new?

This past month, I've had the chance to speak with some of you on the phone and one thing I like to ask is the question: "What's new with you?" (or What's new in 2021?)

A few of you responded: "Not much." A few said, "Same ole, same ole" One person even said: "I honestly can't tell if it's a brand new year, because every single day seems exactly the same." (I think that person spoke for many of us!)

Well, for the past few Sundays, my sermons have focused on New Attitudes for the New Year because having a healthy attitude and having the proper attitude makes all the difference in how this year is going to go.

You heard me say this quote before: it's by Charles Swindoll who said: *"I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it."*

There's a story about a little boy who wanted to become "The Greatest Baseball Hitter in the World" And so he took a baseball along with a baseball bat and went out to a field all by himself to practice hitting the ball.

Just before he threw the ball up into the sky, the little boy shouted, "I'm gonna be the Greatest hitter in the world!" Then he threw the ball up into the sky and as he waited for it to come down, he took his first swing and missed. (Strike one.)

So the boy picked up the ball - adjusted his grip on the bat and threw the ball up in the air for a second time, proclaiming like before that "He was going to be the greatest **hitter** in the world," but as the ball came down, he swung on it and missed again. (Strike two.)

Undeterred, the boy picked up the ball - trying to visualize hitting it with his bat, then he proclaimed yet again, "I'm going to be the greatest hitter in the world" and for the 3rd time, he threw the ball in the air and just like before, he swung on it and missed. (Strike three.)

The little boy stood there looking at the ball on the ground - thinking to himself, maybe he wasn't going to be the greatest hitter in the world, but instead of getting depressed and instead of being discouraged, he decided he needed a new attitude!

And so he picked up the ball and then proclaimed in a loud voice: "I'm the greatest **PITCHER** in the world!"

That's attitude.

This morning - my goal is to be "**The Best Preacher in the world!**"
That may or may not happen today (we'll see in a few minutes) and I hope your goal is to be "**The best sermon listener/reader in the world!**"

The new attitude that I'd like to impress upon you all this morning, and the new attitude that I want all of us to be - is to be "Free."

I want you to be Free. I want you to have a "Free attitude"
Can I ask you to say the word with me? "Free."

This time -can I ask you to take a deep breath (fill your lungs with air) and with your whole breath - as you let all the air out, say the word again. How did that feel? Refreshing? Liberating? (or did you almost pass out?)

The attitude that I want to encourage you to have or be - is to be free!

Things that are free

This past week - I've been playing around with the word "free" and what I mean by that is I've been saying the word over and over and over again.

The word "free" is a fun and great word to say even all by itself, but then I realized - it's even a greater word when you combine it with others.

For example, when you add the word Free next to the word Debt, you get the phrase: "**Debt-Free.**" Now, all of a sudden the word "free" has a context. To be free of debt - to not owe any money.



Did you know that as of 2019, the national consumer debt here in the United States was a staggering \$14.1 trillion dollars? That works out to about \$90,000 per person and that was 2 years ago. And with the pandemic year that we all just went through - that figure is going to be higher. But to be "free of debt" would be a great thing.

Then, if you added the word Free to the word: Sugar - you get the phrase "**Sugar-Free.**"

Have you seen this picture that shows "how much sugar" is in every day food items?



One small can of Coke has 10 teaspoons of sugar. One bag of skittles has 12 teaspoons of sugar. That pint of Hagan Daaz ice cream that we all love so much? 21 teaspoons of sugar!

We all eat too much sugar and should consider things that are "sugar free."

Then, if you combine the word Free with the word Cancer you get the phrase "**Cancer-Free.**" Isn't that a great combination?



I've heard stories that some hospitals have installed a bell on their wall, so that whenever one of their patients finishes their chemotherapy and is declared cancer free, they get to ceremoniously ring that bell in front of the hospital staff and family to proclaim to all in the hospital who can hear it that "I am Cancer Free!"

Can you imagine that moment?

To be cancer free
to be debt free,
to eat sugar free,

when you add the word "Free" to a whole lot of different words, it can change your life and the way you live, as well as your attitudes.

John 8:31-36 and 2 Cor 3:17

We have two passages for today on the topic of being free.

"To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?" Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

John 8:31-36,

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom."

2 Cor 3:17.

The bible talks a lot about the topic of freedom. In the Old Testament, you often hear the topic being spoken in regards to being free from slavery. Then in the New Testament, you often hear the topic being spoken in regards to being free from the law.

Then in the church, preachers like to talk about "freedom" more closer to the 4th of July, when our nation celebrates our Independence Day.

But what does "freedom" have to do with attitudes and how does "being free" change the way we look at things?

Well, that's exactly what Jesus was trying to point out when He confronted a group of Jews in John 8:31.

Jesus was trying to tell them that they were still "acting like slaves" but if they knew the truth and believed in His words - then they would truly be free.

"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free."

The Jews didn't really like what Jesus said. In fact, they wanted to point out that they had never been slaves;

"We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?"

I don't know why the Jews said what they said to Jesus because historically speaking - the Jews had been slaves. The first time when they were in Egypt - they were the slaves to Pharaoh, and even again later on - they were slaves to King Xerxes if you recall the story of Esther.

So when they said: "We've never been slaves to anyone" they weren't exactly correct because their history said otherwise.

But Jesus wasn't there to give them all a history lesson. What Jesus was pointing out was that they were still acting like slaves still living w/a slave-mentality, maybe not to Pharaoh and maybe not to King Xerxes, but this time to the law.

This is what the Apostle Paul was referring to in our second passage this morning.

"Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." (2 Cor 3:17)

Even in other letters, Paul wrote:

"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death."

Romans 8:1-3

That's what Paul was telling believer, which is the same as what Jesus was telling the Jews - if we believe in Christ and follow His teachings, if we have a relationship with Christ and we are born again, we are free, we have spiritual freedom, and instead of being slaves - we are sons and daughters of God.

That changes everything and should change our attitudes.

Be Free from Fear.

So, the first "free" attitude that I want to encourage you to have, or I want to encourage you to be, is to be Free from any kind of fear and to be Free from being afraid.

What do I mean by that? Well, because of Jesus Christ and what He did on the Cross, and because of Jesus Christ and our relationship with Him, we do not have to be afraid of God and have nothing to fear about God.

Back when my daughter was in the 5th grade, her elementary school hosted a Spelling Bee.

In each of the 5th grade classes - they had their own little spelling bee's and the top students from each class advanced to the "schoolwide" spelling bee in front of the whole entire school.

For this "final" spelling bee -they invited all the students from every single grade - they also invited all the parents, aunts, uncles and grandparents,

and to make it even more exciting, they invited a local sitting judge from the Torrance courthouse to preside over the spelling bee! (Yes, I also thought it was strange at the time.) He was the one who basically called out the words for all the students to spell.

Well, I've never met a judge before and I was very curious as to why the school invited a judge to preside over the spelling bee, and after the spelling bee was over, parents were looking for their kids - so that they could go home.

So, I'm looking for Abby (like all the other parents) and off in the corner, I notice the judge standing there. I have no reason to say hello, in fact, he kind of looked intimidating, and as parents and children walked by the judge, they all put on a very formal demeanor. "Your Honor..." (as parents extending hands to shake)

The Judge also carried himself in a very professional manner. (His body language, his tone of voice - things like that.)

But then all of a sudden, everything changed when a little girl ran up to him shouting "Daddy - Daddy!" and then she jumped into his arms, and the judge broke into a big smile and then he scooped her up and carried her to their car. (yes, the Judge's daughter also went to the same school.)

I would have kept at least 6 feet away from the judge out of professional courtesy - plus - he was kinda scary, but that little girl jumped right into his arms.

Do not be afraid.

Did you know that in the Bible the phrase "Do not be afraid" appears 365 times? That's one time for every day of the year - "Do not be afraid."

And the reason why that phrase appears in the Bible more than any other command, may be because people were genuinely afraid of God.

To Zachariah who was about to have a son who would become John the Baptist - an angel of the Lord appeared before him and said: "Do not be afraid."

To Mary, who also was about to have a Son who was Jesus, the angel Gabriel appeared before her and said: "Do not be afraid."

To Joseph, who didn't know what to make of all this, an angel of the Lord appeared before him and said: "**Do not be afraid** to take Mary as your wife because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit"

And then, to the Shepherds who were watching over the flocks, an angel of the Lord appeared before them and said: "**Do not be afraid**, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people."

We have nothing to be afraid of God. Be Free from Fear.

God is not a judge waiting to pronounce judgement or judge the way we spell, God is like a loving father waiting with open arms.

Be Free from Worry

The second freedom that we have in Jesus Christ that should also affect our attitudes, is the Freedom we have of not having to worry.

Or to say it another way: "Be Free from Worry."

This past week, some of you may have heard I had to get a Covid Test. The test result came out negative and I had no symptoms at all, but for a few days, if I can be honest, I was really worried.

"What if" scenarios went through my mind. "What will happen" started to weigh me down, but rest assured, I'm ok.

I'm sure that if I asked all of you, you probably have a few things that you are worried about. Maybe some of you are worried about your jobs, your businesses. Maybe some of you are worried about going back to school. You're worried about family members, children out of state, parents in nursing homes, loved ones in the hospital. I can only imagine the kind of things that some of you are worried about.

Well, back in the 1st century, people also had worries. Maybe some the same - maybe something completely different, but there was also one other thing, that they worried about a lot - they worried whether or not they were "good enough" (good enough - spiritually) and by that I mean whether or not they would get into heaven.

Do you remember that time when a young man ran up to Jesus and the man asked: "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

The question shows that a lot of people were wondering if they were doing enough, and in regards to the law, if they were obedient enough to be deemed worthy in the eyes of God.

There's even a letter in the New Testament - the book of Hebrews addressed to all the Jewish converts who became Christians, to stop sneaking off to the temple to lift up sacrifices just like they did before, because what Jesus did on the Cross was good enough once and for all.

But some Jewish Christians felt like they needed a little bit of extra credit, because they didn't think that Christ's atonement was enough, and so they lifted up animal sacrifices just for good measure.

Do not worry about how God thinks of you, because in Jesus Christ and because of Jesus Christ, God's love was displayed and God's requirements were fulfilled.

Be Free from What Others Think About You.

Lastly, because of who we are in Jesus Christ and because of our relationship with Him, be Free from what others may think about you.

I am not as active on social media as other pastors may be; I don't post a lot of pictures, I don't comment on others posts, but when I do, I'm always worried about what others might think.

"Does this picture show my best side?"

"What will people think if I write that?"

One of the temptations that Jesus faced (it was actually the 2nd temptation) had to do with jumping from the highest point of the temple in Jerusalem.

The test was to see if God would send angels to keep Jesus from injury, but what made this test all the more alluring was the fact that the temple in Jerusalem was a very public place, and the highest part of the temple was visible to all those below.

If that temptation were to take place today, everyone would have their smartphones out - ready to post videos on Facebook on Instagram and Snapchat, and then all of a sudden, Jesus would be internet famous and those video's would have gone viral.

Jesus would have been an instant celebrity and would have been the talk of the town, and not just any town - but Jerusalem - the capital city.

But Jesus responded: "Do not put the Lord your God to the test" and then, to the next temptation He said, "Worship the Lord your God and serve him only."

Jesus didn't care what people would think about Him, what He cared about, was keeping God as the focus.

A few weeks ago, here in our own capital city - we had an inauguration. All the nation was watching a new president being sworn in.

Well, there was one person who attended - his name was Bernie Sanders, and because people had smart phones and cameras, we all know now how Bernie Sanders dressed for the occasion.



Have you seen this picture? It is now a famous meme and people are putting this picture with all sorts of different backgrounds.

I have to say, I don't know enough about Bernie Sander's political views - so this is not a political commentary, but why this picture became so famous is because of what he wore to the presidential inauguration.

He wore a cheap disposable face mask; his regular down overcoat, and then those classic mittens!

Most people wore designer labels, fancy suits, name brand labels, even sharp looking suits.

A few days later, someone had Bernie Sanders on a talk show and the host wanted to ask him about what he was wearing, but Bernie brushed off the question and wanted to talks about politics. Again - not a political commentary - but here's a guy who doesn't care what the world thinks about him.

Jesus (not to be confused with Bernie Sanders) wasn't concerned whether people would be watching down below. What Jesus was focused on was bringing attention to God above.

And so, my encouragement to you is to be free from what others may think about you, and instead, to be focused on helping others to think about God.

For all we are - are earthen vessels (clay jars) not to bring attention to ourselves, but to the treasure that is within.

Be Free from what others think about you.

Be Free from Worry

and Be Free from Fear.