

## I. AM. CHANGED.

---

Series: I.Am.Changed.  
February 21, 2021  
Edgar King  
Spiritual formation, Lent  
2 Cor 3:17-18

This is the first Sunday of Lent. Lent is the 40 day period that started last Wednesday, Ash Wednesday, that lead up to Easter. The purpose of lent is to recall, retell and relive the story of Jesus' journey to his crucifixion and death.

The crucifixion of Jesus is the centrepiece of our faith. Without His death and resurrection, we have no salvation. Then all we have are beautiful stories.

The Gospel, which God's power for salvation is that Jesus lived, died and rose again for us. And actually, for years the church focused more on lent and easter than Christmas.

And how is it observed? It is a time of repentance, prayer, fasting and reflection. Reflection on the life, suffering and sacrifice and triumph and victory of Jesus. This story does not end with the cross remember. There is the resurrection. And these two are not 2 separate events but one victorious event.

And in the same way, your story does not end with the suffering of the cross you bear. Even the fasting you get to do ends with a celebration of Easter and the resurrection of Jesus. And this one event changed everything. The history of the world as we know it changed.

So many people that reigned as lords at that time were only first heard of as footnotes in the story of Jesus.

They were everything then, yet the most significant world event happened and they faded into footnotes. And during Lent we get to slow down and intentionally focus on this singularly world-changing event.

Up until the need for political correctness and quite frankly sensitivity to the fact that the world is not all Christian, History was divided by this one event into BC and AD.

But that is not all that changed. We were changed. At that moment in history, the reality of Human beings was changed. Because God had not only walked the earth but He had taken death into himself and defeated it, alongside it our sin.

At that moment, Jesus was reconciling the world to God. And so when we say yes to Jesus, when we put our trust in Jesus, all this becomes our reality. Paul says that we are now a new creation, totally new beings. We have been changed. John calls us children of God.

Then the cool thing is that after that we receive the Holy Spirit, the spirit of Jesus. This is how Jesus is still present with us. And what this means is that not only did things change for us at that moment forever, but things continue to change as the Holy Spirit works in us and through us.

There is a prophecy a friend of Jesus called John gave, we are sealed by the Holy Spirit. He saw the church, people from all tongue tribe and nation gathered before God. And we were all sealed by the Holy Spirit.

So not only did things change for us at that moment, not only are things changing for us each day, things will change.

Take a look at what Paul wrote

*Now, the “Lord” I’m referring to is the Holy Spirit, and wherever he is Lord, there is freedom.*

*We can all draw close to him with the veil removed from our faces. And with no veil, we all become like mirrors who brightly reflect the glory of the Lord Jesus. We are being transfigured into his very image as we move from one brighter level of glory to another. And this glorious transfiguration comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*

### **2 Cor 3:17-18**

Hey, because we have the Holy Spirit, everywhere he is Lord, there is freedom. Things have already changed. And think about what all that means. It is not just about not feeling restrained or held back.

It is definitely the equivalent of what we mean when we tell someone to feel at home and feel free. Yet it is certainly more than that.

Where the Holy Spirit is Lord, we have freedom. We feel at home. We are not intruders. We belong to our father, with Him. We are accepted. Our past is blotted out and not held against us.

Yet it is bigger than that. It is saying that where the Holy Spirit is Lord, we have freedom from sin, from fear, from hate, guilt, pride, unforgiveness. All the things that you were once slaves to you have been broken free from. Your status has changed and you are not slaves to them anymore. You are a changed person.

Have you ever had something you were struggling with, whether it was a sin or just a bad habit and then one day you wake up and it does not have the same pull it once had on you? This is the freedom the Holy Spirit brings us. The things that once had us in chains lose their power over us.

Then Paul says that we are reflecting the glory of Jesus. Not only will we reflect God’s glory, we already are. And I have said before, glory is not shiny. Instead, it is weight, it is presence. The essence of God himself. And because of the Holy Spirit in us, we are already a reflection of God’s glory.

The thing is, God is already seeing in you all the glory of Jesus. The work is already complete.

Then he says we are being changed from one glory to another. It is not just something that happened it is something that will keep happening until we look more like Jesus. If you look into your life and you see areas where you still do not see God's glory, this should be great encouragement.

When people say the church has hypocrites, I say to them, that is where they belong. That is where they are changed from glory to glory. That is where the Holy Spirit makes them more like Jesus everyday.

This Lent, I invite you to reflect on this truth that we have been changed. How can our hearts be filled with gratitude for the fact that Jesus' life, death and resurrection have changed us. What are some of the more specific things for you that you are free from?

You see, sadly sometimes we sometimes live as if the only thing that matters is believing the right thing and that we do not need to do that which we believe. Actually, correct belief should cause correct action.

In one of Jesus' conversations with his disciples, he gives the analogy of trees and the fruits they produce. He says you will know a tree by the fruit it produces. A good fruit, meaning it is good on the inside, goes on to produce good fruit.

Similarly, if there has to be with us on the outside to show what God has done inside us. We cannot be changed on the inside and have it produce no change on the outside.

That has been a very bad idea in the church for so many years. What it's done is to produce people who will not submit to the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. A people who will think that as long as they confess the right things, they do not have to necessarily show the right fruit outwardly.

Only where the Holy Spirit is Lord is there freedom and real change, real transformation, real transfiguration.

The Vineyard has always said, come as you are but don't stay the same. There cannot be true work of the Holy Spirit producing change in us that then does not result in good fruit. Real change is seen in the fruit we bear because where the Holy Spirit is Lord, there is freedom.

Sadly what you end up having is a people who will claim to know God but that will not let the Holy Spirit be Lord. Which then means there will be no real freedom in their lives. There will be no real transformation in their lives.

They will say the right words and believe the right things but that won't be what their spouses see at home, that is not what their employees see on Monday. That is not what people see during election season. Is it not surprising what believers become during elections both here and elsewhere in the world?

Here is how Paul puts it in a letter he wrote to a young pastor called Titus (1:16)

*They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are disgusting, disobedient, and disqualified from doing anything good.*

If our actions, the way we live, do not show the change the Holy Spirit brings then our 'knowing' God is just a claim. The Holy Spirit produces real change in us that makes us produce good fruit, like the good tree Jesus was talking about.

Yet that good fruit cannot be produced without us letting the Him be Lord. And what do you do when someone is Lord? You obey. There can be no real change without living a life of obedience.

Again we circle back to the same thing. The word of God is not only to be heard but obeyed. The voice of the Holy Spirit is not only to be heard but obeyed.

The change we are to see, the growing from one glory to another is borne out of a long obedience in the same direction.

How do you become patient? Every time you feel stretched by people you choose God's voice over your own and the world's. Over and over again. Then one day you walk up and you realise that you are a patient person.

How do you become a non-anxious presence? Every time there is a storm, choose to rest in Jesus. Rest in as a practice anyway over and over again. One day we wake up and you are less anxious person.

How do you live a life sexual purity? You choose it at every turn and it does not matter where you start from. You choose it over and over again and it becomes your reality.

How do you become as generous as your father? You choose generosity even when the world wants to make you feel like you have less. You give over and over again and one day, you are a generous person as the Holy Spirit keeps producing change in you.

It has always been a bout a long walk in the same direction.

Lent has always been observed as a season of reflection, repentance and celebration. And Ash Wednesday in some traditions would include people having ash on their forehead. Ashes speak to repentance and mortality.

The Bible often speaks of 'repenting in sackcloth and ashes'. So does Jesus. Someone grieving and or repenting would cover themselves in ashes as a public expression of their inner state.

So we do not do that anymore. But why? Is it that we have nothing to repent of? Of course we do? Might we be too ashamed of to repent publicly? Then there is the privatisation of our faith.

OT prophets talked about proud & unrepentant as having brazen foreheads. Which is the opposite of an ashen forehead. So one of the things I invite us in this season of Lent is to reflect on the fruit being produced in us. Where are you being invited into obedience?

We have been changed by the obedience and sacrifice of Jesus. Is it producing fruit in you? And the thing about fruit is that people can both see and feed

It is producing gentleness, patience, kindness, goodness and self-control. Or are people around us finding us abrasive and cut when they encounter us? Are our spouses and siblings finding that we are not patient with them yet we need so much patience from them as they put up with us? Are your coworkers finding you a kind person that mirrors the kindness God has had on the world? Are people seeing self control or are you giving into every appetite and sin?

Surely a good tree produces good fruit. Yet the solution is not to focus on sin. John Wimber the founder of the Vineyard said he found that the more you focus on sin, the more you sin, but the more you focus on Jesus, the more you become free. It is exactly how Paul puts it, as we focus on Him we are being transformed from one glory to another.

So how can you life your gaze to Jesus because that is where you are being called to

Let's Pray