

**Opening Scripture**

Psalm 15

**Isaiah 26:3-4**

*You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you,  
all whose thoughts are fixed on you!*

*<sup>4</sup> Trust in the LORD always, for the LORD GOD is the eternal Rock.*

**Scripture**

John 1:35 - 51

**Message**

Our Church's mission statement says: "***Germantown Church of God exists to move people who are broken spiritually, physically, relationally or emotionally into the presence of Jesus where they can be healed and transformed into the image of Jesus.***" I want to talk about that last phrase ***transformed into the image of Jesus***. Why do we believe that is important? We believe that the Bible teaches us that we were created in the beginning by God, in His image. That does not mean that we will look like God in a physical sense, but that the character of God will be manifested in our lives. But the Bible tells us that when sin entered the world, the image of God within us was marred and distorted. Because of sin, we no longer manifest righteousness, or holiness, or goodness. People have become self-centered, and rebellious, preferring to live our lives in our own way, rather than in God's way. But God has not given up on us because of our sin and failure. He set in motion a plan to restore in us His image, so that we would become the kind of people He intended for us to be. God has come to the earth in the person of Jesus to restore us. The apostle Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 4:4 that ***Jesus is the image of God***. And in Romans 8:28-29, Paul says this:

***<sup>28</sup> And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who<sup>1</sup> have been called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup> For those God foreknew **he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son**, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.***

God's desire is to change people so that they will be conformed to the image of Jesus, who is the image of God. So that is the Biblical basis for that statement in our Mission Statement.

How does this "transformation" into the image of Jesus come about? Sometimes this work of being changed into the likeness of Jesus is called **Spiritual Formation**. Robert Mulholland writes:

***"Spiritual formation is a process of being conformed to the image of Christ, a journey into becoming persons of compassion, persons who forgive, persons who care deeply for others and the world, persons who offer themselves to God to become agents of divine grace in the lives of others and their world – in brief, persons who love and serve **as Jesus did**."***

There is no magic wand that we can wave over people and suddenly change them into what God wants them to be. We can't Zap people. Being changed so that our lives will be conformed to the image of Jesus is a process that takes time. Now, for many people change is not easy, it is not attractive, it is not something that we enjoy. When we are talking about having our character changed or transformed, that becomes even more challenging. Mulholland says that change or ***transformation takes place in those areas where we are "unlike" Jesus***. That will require that we have to let go of somethings, get rid of somethings. We will discover attitudes, habits, behaviors, patterns of thinking that are in conflict with the way Jesus lived and taught. When that happens we must be willing to let those things go. We must put those "un-Christlike" characteristics to death and embrace His character – His attitudes, behaviors, patterns of thinking.

So – HOW does this transformation happen? How do we know what in our lives is "Un-Christlike" and what Christlikeness looks like? I think that this passage that I read from John gives us some guidance – we spend time with Jesus, we follow Him, we get to know what He is like.

The passage takes place as Jesus begins His public ministry. John the Baptist was engaged in his ministry of preparing the way for the Messiah, awakening the hearts and minds of people, so that they would be ready to respond to the Messiah when he appeared. One day Jesus came to John to be baptized, and John makes this declaration about Jesus: ***Behold the Lamb of God!*** Two men who had been listening to John, heard him say that and they left John to follow Jesus. When Jesus asked what they wanted, they said they wanted to spend some time with him. (Where are you staying?) As they spent a day with Him, they became convinced that Jesus was the One they were waiting for – the Messiah. One of those men – Andrew – had a brother named Simon, who was a fisherman. Andrew went and found his brother and brought him to Jesus. When Jesus met his brother Simon, he said to Simon, you will become known as Cephas, or Peter – which means Rock. Peter then leaves his life as a fisherman and becomes a follower of Jesus. The next day, Jesus found 2 more men who he invited to follow Him. One of those men was a man named Nathanael. Initially Nathanael did not think much of Jesus. He questioned whether anything good could come from Nazareth, which was Jesus' hometown. Jesus promises Nathanael that as a follower of Jesus He would see great things.

As these men began their journey of following Jesus, spending time with Him, listening to Him, watching the way He interacted with people, they began to change. Their lives were transformed. As they followed Jesus they learned what He was like. As they learned more about Jesus there would be times when their character, their attitudes, their ways of thinking would clash with Jesus. And they would have to abandon their way of thinking and embrace the character of Jesus. When we see these men after they spent three years following Jesus, we discover that they will look a whole lot more like Jesus than they did before.

When Jesus promised Peter, and Nathanael that once they started to follow Jesus their lives were going to change, they did not turn back. They did not protest and decide that they didn't want to change. They seemed to have been attracted to the possibility of being different. They were willing to learn what Jesus was like and to follow his example. Jonathan Bailey says that change in our character happens when we are willing to "train with Jesus". We must learn to pattern our lives after Christ's. When we do that temptation to sin will have less power over us. We will be more like Jesus. The change and transformation in the lives of these disciples was not always easy. Sometimes the change met with some strong resistance. In my upcoming sermons I want to take a look at some stories from the gospels where there was a clash between the character of the disciples and the character of Jesus. As we look at their stories I hope that we will learn about ourselves and the transformation that Jesus wants to bring about in our lives.

I am inviting you today to begin a journey where your life will be changed so that it conforms to the image of Jesus. The disciples were open to change. They were willing to spend time in the presence of Jesus and learn what he was like. They were willing to abandon what they were before and embrace what they learned from Jesus. The question that we may have today is How can I spend time with Jesus. He is no longer here in this world. I can't follow Him. I can't see how He responds, how He behaves, how He treats others. If we are serious about wanting to see the image of Jesus produced in us, we must commit to learning about Him. We learn about Him through the Gospels. Read through one of the gospels and get to know what Jesus is like. Lay aside your preconceived ideas and thoughts, and just learn about Jesus. As you do that there will come times when you will discover that who Jesus is, comes into conflict with your own ideas, patterns of behavior, thoughts. Conformity to the image of Jesus will take place in those areas where we are most "un-like" Jesus. So be ready to let go of, put to death what is keeping you from being like Jesus.

You were created in the image of God. Christ is the image of God, so as the image of Christ is birthed into you, you will begin to be more of what God created you to be.

### **Closing Prayer and Benediction**