

## “God Renews All Things”

Among all creatures, human beings have a unique joy and longing for what is new: new clothes, a new house, a new phone, new knowledge, new technology, new friends, a new environment, new love, and so on. What has been your most memorable experience of renewal?

But did you know that God is continually doing new things—not only in His creation, but also in His work of salvation for us? Today’s Scripture passages show us the kind of renewal God is bringing through His saving work. Let’s reflect together on what these changes look like.

### I. Jesus Gave Us a New Commandment: “Love One Another.”

In today’s Gospel reading from John, Jesus gives this commandment to His disciples just after finishing His final Passover meal, shortly before His crucifixion. But this commandment to love was not new in itself. God had already given it in the Old Testament through the Law of Moses. So, why did Jesus call it a new commandment?

There’s a key phrase that makes it new: “as I have loved you.” In Leviticus 19:18, God said, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” But this kind of love—as yourself—remains within the realm of human, relative love.

Jesus, however, demonstrated a radically different love. He loved Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him. He forgave the evildoers who crucified Him. He loved even His enemies, and the whole world steeped in sin. This new commandment calls us to a divine, self-sacrificing love—a love that reflects God’s own love. Can the love we practice reach this level?

To live out this love, we need a deep and growing passion for Christ—to know Him more, to walk closely with Him, and to be more like Him. Without that desire, we may not even be capable of loving ourselves well, let alone others. For only through Christ can we know who we truly are, and what real love means.

Is it truly possible to love others as Jesus has loved us? And if so, what blessings come when we do?

Would you have the courage to practice this kind of love if you knew it would bring both spiritual and material blessings?

Let me share a real story:

Pastor L once reached out to a poor convict named J, who lived in a red-light district. Although J attended worship services regularly, his life showed little change.

Still, Pastor L cherished him as if he were his own son. He gave his time, money, and love—eventually helping J move to distant places: quiet towns, islands, and even the mountains, all in an effort to remove him from his criminal environment. At one point, Pastor L even slept with his arm tied to J's arm so that J wouldn't run away or return to crime.

For 10 years, Pastor L devoted himself to J's transformation. During that time, J spent three years in prison. Then one day, J drank five bottles of whiskey and died from a heart attack. After Pastor L cremated J's body, he was physically, mentally, and spiritually exhausted. In despair, he cried out, "I can no longer fulfill my mission of proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom of God."

When he returned to his church—located next to a brothel—a friend of J said, "Pastor, people like us can never be made new." But in that moment, Pastor L was reminded of Ezekiel 37: the vision of the valley of dry bones. And this confession burst forth from his heart: "You're right. I can't do it. But my God, who brings dry bones to life and turns them into a mighty army—He can."

From then on, the people who once harassed and threatened Pastor L slowly began to change. They repented. They bore fruit. They were renewed. One former pimp received Jesus and left her business behind, transforming her life. Today, she serves as a lay leader in the church.

Pastor L has ministered to prostitutes, gang members, and homeless people for over 30 years. His church is located in an area where youth are prohibited from entering. Ten years ago, he founded a Homeless Rehabilitation Center. Now, over 100 people live there—and 70% of them have jobs.

So why do we often believe that this kind of love is only possible for pastors, missionaries, or special evangelists? True, not everyone is called to do what Pastor L did. But there is only one principle of love that God calls all His children to practice: “Just as Jesus loved me with His whole life, I too will love others.”

We often fail to live out this love because we don’t believe Jesus’ words. And because we don’t practice it, we miss out on the deep joy and blessing that comes through such love. But remember—Jesus wants all of God’s children to live out this love, to experience its joy, its power, and even its miracles. And He promises to help us do just that.

## II. The Lord Is Doing the New Work of Preaching the Gospel Today.

Let’s turn to the book of Acts. Today’s passage is from chapter 11, but in fact, it’s a retelling of what happened in chapter 10. Here, the apostle Peter reports to the church in Jerusalem about his experience of gospel expansion through an encounter in the house of Cornelius, a Roman army officer.

This story is a crucial moment in the history of Christian mission. Until then, since the resurrection of Jesus, the gospel had largely remained within Israel and among the Jewish people. However, this event marked the beginning of the gospel’s expansion to Gentiles—first to Rome, then to the whole world. All the gospel blessings we enjoy today trace back to this very moment.

Let’s take a closer look at some of the events that helped bring about this new chapter in gospel history.

First, it is the Lord who leads the way in this new movement of the gospel. One day, while Peter and Cornelius were each praying separately, the Lord came to them. Through the Holy Spirit, both received unexpected, deeply spiritual experiences. God directed them with clear instructions—showing them what role they were to play in the unfolding of His salvation plan.

And when they obeyed the leading of the Holy Spirit, both they and everyone around them experienced the amazing power of God’s salvation. In particular, this event tore down long-standing barriers of ethnicity, culture, and religion—divisions that had existed since the beginning of human history. Through this encounter, all people were made one family in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Second, wherever spiritual renewal occurs in the Bible, it is always accompanied by a visible change in people's lives. When Peter began to preach in Cornelius's house, the Holy Spirit came upon everyone there. The experience was so powerful and undeniable that Peter immediately recognized it as the same spiritual phenomenon he and his fellow disciples had experienced at Pentecost.

At that moment, Peter remembered Jesus' words: "John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." Because of this Word, Peter could confidently affirm that this new spiritual experience was part of God's will. When he reported what had happened, the leaders of the Jerusalem church rejoiced and glorified God. They praised the Lord for allowing the gospel to be preached to the Gentiles.

Even today, we encounter new spiritual movements and experiences. Each time we do, we must carefully examine them in the light of Scripture. We must ask: What evidence does the Bible provide to confirm this experience? What effect does it have on our lives and faith?

Genuine spiritual renewal should lead to harmony, restoration, and wholeness—in our homes, our hearts, and our relationships. It should bring lasting health and blessing, both spiritually and physically.

### III. The Lord Renews Everything Day by Day.

Now let's turn to our passage from Revelation. The Greek word *kainon*, used in the phrase "new heaven and new earth," refers to something qualitatively new, unlike *neos*, which means something simply recent or newly made. So, "a new heaven and a new earth" does not mean merely a refreshed version of the sky and ground we know. It points to an entirely new kind of creation—a new order, made by God Himself.

In Revelation 21:3, we also encounter the word "tabernacle," which means "God's dwelling" or "His presence." The New Testament uses this same language in John 1:14, when it says, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." This shows us that God's ultimate desire is to dwell with His people—to live in relationship with them.

Have you ever heard new believers talk about what they experienced when they first received assurance of salvation?

Many of them say things like, “I realized that I am a child of God, and everything in the world looked new. People, nature, animals—everything seemed beautiful and full of life!” Did they go to a new planet or another world? No. It was a renewal of their vision—a new way of seeing the world through the eyes of a child of God.

Of course, we also believe that one day the Lord will bring about a literal new heaven and new earth—a new creation of *kainon* quality. But even now, whenever our inner being—our soul—is renewed, everything around us takes on a new meaning. This kind of joy and fresh anticipation is a gift from the Lord of salvation.

So, I bless you today: May you practice the love of Jesus in your everyday life—through your prayers, your words, and your fellowship. And may you experience the renewing power of God at work in you and through you. Amen.

***Reflections and Applications for Today's Sermon:***

1) In John 13:34, Jesus commanded, *“Love one another as I have loved you.”*

What kind of love has Jesus shown you that you are now called to practice?

2) In Acts 11:17, Peter confessed, *“Who was I to think that I could oppose God?”* Have you experienced a similar moment of surrender or obedience? Examine whether there is something in your personal relationships that the Holy Spirit is prompting you to submit to or obey.

3) Meditate on Revelation 21:3–4.

When have you ever sensed this promise being fulfilled in your daily life? If not, what kind of spiritual effort or openness might the Lord be asking of you in order to experience it more fully?