



# Christ Lutheran Church

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**Share God's Word, share His love, and do it now!**

Pastor Chip Winter, Director of Ministries

***“Get up and go with a clean slate” Mark 1:4-11***  
***January 7, 2018***

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Dear friends in Christ,

It is the New Year and so it's a great time to start fresh. It's a great time to break old habits and start new ones. It's a great time to start over with a clean slate. The phrase clean slate comes from the time when children wrote down homework problems and then gave an answer. If there was any mistakes on their solutions and answers they were told to wipe the slate clean and start over. Like a chalkboard, slates were also cleaned at taverns when someone paid their tab in full. Now they could start with a new tab and accumulate more debt on their tab.

John the Baptist was telling people to basically wipe the slate clean and start over. And John did something so basic it was genius. He taught people right from wrong. People were finally understanding what was sinful. Somehow they really hadn't paid attention too much and didn't consider how to really live their lives.

And John offered them something that was specific. In other readings of scripture we get a glimpse of John's teaching that applied to each individual. John's prescriptions were right on target.

It was a message so simple and so basic, everybody was coming to hear. Everyone was coming to hear what they were doing wrong and learning what to do right. And what was even better is that there was no making up for the past. There was no working to balance out doing more good to balance out the bad.

This is exactly what the Pharisees were up to. Teaching people they had to do things to make up for sins and then prescribing elaborate complicated things to do, so much that people couldn't figure it out. And not only that but there were all kinds of new rules being given by the Pharisees it was impossible to keep up. It was like following a diet plan that is so complicated you give up just trying to understand it.

With John it was simple. Do things differently. John himself lived out his teaching. He had a simple diet. Locusts and wild honey(none of this processed honey we get nowadays) no offense honey makers. And I really don't think those were chocolate covered locusts, although that sounds fun to try. And John had a simple wardrobe. A robe and a belt. No pants, No shirt, no undees, and no socks. Think about it, it was a weight loss dream

one size fits all outfit. Not to mention it was all- natural camels hair. John wiped his slate clean giving up his old life of living comfortably. John was raised in a nice Christian family. Zechariah and Elizabeth seemed like good people. But John's lifestyle was different. He was willing to make the big changes that were more outside the box.

It would have been tempting to take John's message a little to practical and just make things about outward training, while good for the body, do not match up with spiritual change.

It was all back to basics with John. Basic changes offered basic results. Easy peasy right. Eat less food. Loose weight. Stop spending money. No more debt. Stop doing bad stuff. Start doing good stuff. Life is better. Wash. Rinse. Repeat. Not a bad system really. But is it really that easy?

People sincerely repented of their sins as we do, but would they carry out these new years resolutions? And let's be clear, these were not supposed to last just one year. These changes were to be implemented permanently. When it came to the hard stuff, I wonder if people had the will-power to carry it out?

There was a certain piece in John's system that made it easier to execute. You are forgiven. That really helps people move on because they no longer need to be held back by the past. They no longer need to feel guilty and

they no longer need to be held back by the scars of being hurt in previous years.

It's at this point where we find a slight weakness in John's Baptism. It's not easy to let the past go. I remember feeling like I was worthless. I remember hurting someone deeply in a way that I have a hard time stopping regret.

Think about what happened last year. Think about what happened in years past. Can you let it go? Not like the Movie Frozen where "letting go" essentially meant releasing more powers that cause problems. Not like Kilo Ren either, who apparently wants to murder people so he can let go of the past.

Relying on ourselves, there is no way to wipe the slate clean. So our motivation to change grows very weak. And that's why we have something that does the impossible. It's easy to think that Jesus is the answer. But today the more fitting answer to our problems is the Holy Spirit.

In the beginning the Holy Spirit hovered over the waters in creation. And now The Holy Spirit hovers over us in baptism. That is essentially the only difference we get in Jesus baptism compared to Johns. John says it himself "I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

Covering past sins is impossible to do on our own. But with God all things are possible. Isn't that one of the best reasons we baptize infants? It's the promise that is for you and your children that the Holy Spirit will work in their lives no matter what.

Holy Spirit brings forgiveness wipes it away and gives us the strength to change. With the Holy Spirit given in baptism we are ready to get up and go and do.

Being a Christian should allow us to make drastic changes to our lives. God may decide to help us get over bad habits, guilt and hurt over a period of time. God isn't always about quick fixes that often times don't last. Instead sometimes we can take the time to do something over and over. And that is ask God for help. Ask him to give us the Holy Spirit so we can change our lives.

On the other hand sometimes God asks us to make changes immediately. Does it make any sense to continue to moderately sin so we can transition into not sinning? No. In these types of situations God does want us to quit cold turkey.

Imagine you really did wipe the slate clean, give up clothes, house home, and everything. Oh wait that is what Jesus told people to do when they

followed him. Yes, start over and wipe the slate clean with Jesus and with the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Actually you can do even better than wiping the slate clean. You can get rid of that debt of sin once and for all through Jesus death on the cross. You can nail it to him and then get up and go. You can leave the past in the past knowing that Jesus has paid your debt.

And you can live your life not making the same mistakes and doing the same sins. In fact you don't have to keep sinning to replace old sins. But you can't do anything without the Holy Spirit. It's that Spirit gives us a power to do the impossible. To change. And one day when it is all said and done we will be completely changed and we will take on a new body and soul as the dying body takes on a new body, a new body the lives once and for all to all eternity. Amen.