

**McCabe United Methodist Church**  
**Naked Gospel: Born Again (part 6)**  
**Galatians 2:19-21 \* John 3:1-8: February 11 & 12, 2012**  
**Pastor Rick Fossum**

Someone asked Pastor Ray the other day, **“Ray, are you born again?”**

Ray said, **“no, I’m a Methodist.”**

There’s a lot of confusion when it comes to being born again. What does it mean? What does it do? How do you get born again? Does it hurt?

In our lesson from John, Nicodemus, a Pharisee, had questions about his life. One night, he paid a visit to Jesus. Jesus told him, **“Nicodemus, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born again.”**

Poor Nicodemus, he didn’t understand. **“What do you mean,”** he asked Jesus? **“Are you telling me that I must re-enter my mother’s womb a second time and be born again?”**

What about you? Do you understand what it means to be born again?

When I was in Mesa last week, I was shopping in this one mall. I happened to walk by a restaurant with a big sign on their door that said, *Under New Management*. Apparently, the new owners of this restaurant wanted to create a new reputation. They wanted to make sure that people realized that their restaurant was *under new management* and not the old management.

I think being born again is like that. It’s exchanging old management for new.

This is the sixth message in a series that Pastor Ray and I are preaching. We’ve been using Andrew Farley’s book called *The Naked Gospel* as our guide. We’re attempting to take a deep look into our Christian faith and strip away all the religious words and traditions and beliefs that come between us and our relationship with God.

Being born again, or as some translations say, being born from above, is one of those religious terms that we Christians stumble all over and it does cause problems between us and God.

In the late 1800's, following the Civil War, a hillbilly from the mountains of North Carolina went to the big city of Raleigh, North Carolina. While he was there, he saw an ice-making machine. He’d never seen or heard of an ice making machine before.

He thought this was great because it meant you could have ice all summer long. So he returned to his mountain community and told his Baptist church about this great new invention. Within a month the church had split into two factions: the ice Baptists and no-ice Baptists. The no-ice Baptists believed that the ice machine violated God's natural order of things.

The argument went something like this: If God had wanted them to have ice in the summertime, God would have frozen their lakes, rivers and streams all year long.

Do you see how we can muddle things up as Christians? Being born again is a simple matter. It's not about following rules or laws or traditions or doctrines. It's not about whether or not we go to heaven either. It's about Jesus. It's about putting your life and my life under new management.

Woody Allen, famous actor, director and producer once said, **“My only regret in life is that I was not somebody else.”**

I think this could describe a lot of people . . . maybe even some of us. **“Our only regret in life is that we were not somebody else.”**

Have you ever felt that way? Have you ever wished you were someone else? Have you ever been unhappy? Do you get up in the morning and it's like every other morning? You have no sense of direction or purpose. You struggle and struggle to get through the day and you just end up surviving . . . at best!

We try to fix our lives by changing jobs or spouses or moving away or something. We think that these changes will make everything better. But the trouble is this: the ghosts and demons follow us.

And so we buy self-improvement books. We go on diets. We take up jogging. We change our hair colors. We buy buckets full of pills thinking they'll help us.

I read an newspaper ad a few years ago about a new-miracle drug called Euphorium. Euphorium was supposed to be the next big life-changer. It was supposed to be the 'can't miss drug' for everyone not happy with their lives. The ad went like this:

*"Are you depressed, stressed, anxious, and moody? Relax naturally with Euphorium, the all-natural way to balance your emotions. (Don't you just love that name Euphorium? Even the name makes you want to go right out and get some.) This all-natural supplement is non-habit forming, safe, and you don't need a prescription. It helps to calm your nerves, relieve tension, and reduce mood swings, leaving you at ease, happy, stress-free, and always on task. With Euphorium, you will be clear-headed and revived without an awful hangover or unwanted side-effects. Satisfaction guaranteed! Call now!*

*It will change your life.”*

I didn't call, but sometimes I wish I had!

The point Jesus was trying to make to Nicodemus was this: Life doesn't have to be like that. If you're not happy. If you're not satisfied with your life. If you have more bad days than good days . . . it doesn't have to be like that.

The story of Nicodemus is a story about you and me. It's a story for people who want better lives, better guidance and a better purpose. It's a story for people who seek to make a difference in the world around them. It's a story for people who desire to follow Jesus.

Paul, in Galatians, put it this way: **“and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me...”** -Galatians 2:20 (NRSV)

Did you hear that? **“It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.”** Paul exchanged his old management for the new. His old way of doing things for Jesus' way. Jesus calls it being born again or being born from above. **“It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.”**

Jesus wants us be to under new management . . . his management.

I know people who are good members of their churches, but are still under the same old management. I know people who read their Bibles and sing their hymns, but are still under the same old management. I know people who proudly claim the name of Christian, but are still under the same old management.

Jesus said, **“you must be born again. You must exchange the old management for the new.”**

We've all bought new radios or TVs or computers, right? The one thing they all have in common is this: they must be plugged into a source of power. Without a power source, our gadgets won't work.

When we're under the management of Jesus, he plugs us into a new power source called the Holy Spirit. This Spirit enables us to think differently, act differently and to see life differently. This Spirit provides a new purpose for our lives . . . a reason for our living.

It's not complicated. Andrew Farley, in his Book *The Naked Gospel*, put it like this: **“When we receive Christ as our Lord and Savior, he lives in you, no matter what. Now, whether or not he lives *through* you . . . do you hear the difference? Whether or not he lives *through* you is your choice! The Spirit will not overpower you and make you do**

**something you don't want to do. It's a choice. You either choose Christ and his management or you don't."**

The choosing part is the hard part for most of us. We like to be in control of our lives. We like to be in charge. We like to make our own decisions. We like to be our own persons.

Being born again means turning over this control to Jesus Christ and letting his Spirit manage our lives. I didn't say being born again was easy, just simple.

Frank Sinatra had a popular song called *I Did It My Way*. Some of you may remember this song. I don't know about you, but whenever I do things my way, I mess things up.

We need help. As hard as we try, we can't fix my own lives. We need to choose between the old management or new? Between our way of doing things or the ways of Jesus. It's our choice!

I'm going to ask Julie to play through the first verse of our last hymn. Please, don't stand up. I want you to think about your own life. Are you happy? Are you satisfied? Are you well? Do you have a purpose? Do you know where you're going?

Now, is the time to choose. As Christians, Christ is already in your life. The next step is to ask Jesus to take over. Ask him to be your new manager. Ask him to transform your heart, body and soul.