

# McCabe United Methodist Church

Peace with God (Part 4)

(Based on Billy Graham's book *Peace with God*)

I Corinthians 2:14-16 \* John 3:5-8: March 29 & 30, 2014

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In Texas, there was a man who used to hitch his horse every morning in front of the local saloon. One morning, the saloon keeper came out and found that the horse was hitched in front of the Methodist Church. The saloon keeper saw the man walking down the street and called out, **“Hey, why is your horse hitched in front of the Methodist Church this morning?”**

The man turned around and said, **“Well, last night I was converted at the revival meeting, and I've changed hitching posts.”**

According to Billy Graham, this is what it means to be *born again*. It means that we've changed hitching posts. A person has gone from their old self without Christ to a new self with Christ. *Born again*.

This is the fourth message in a series I'm calling *Peace With God*. It's based on Billy Graham's book of the same name. My message today will be a bit different. It will be based on the chapter called '*The Old and the New*'. It will also include a sprinkling of old time hymns. By the time we're done, it's my hope that we'll all be a little closer to Jesus Christ. And who knows? Maybe even *born again*.

The Bible makes it clear that we have a choice to make. We have to choose between living our lives with Christ or without Christ. Choosing to live our lives with Christ is called '*born again*'. Or, changing hitching posts.

*It's No Secret* what can happen when we include Jesus in our lives. A transformation takes place. We change. Please take out the insert in your bulletin and let's sing this old song together. *It's No Secret*.

**“It is no secret what God can do. What He's done for others, he'll do for you. With arms wide open, he'll pardon you.”**

This is the beginning of being '*born again*'. It's turning to Jesus and saying, **“Yes, I've messed up my life. I'm sorry. Forgive me. Come**

**into my life Lord Jesus and make me a new person. It's no secret what you can do."**

Maybe you heard the story about the pig and the lamb. A farmer brought a pig into his house. He gave the pig a bath, polished her hoofs, put on some Chanel No. 5, tied a ribbon around her neck and put her in the living room.

The pig looked mighty fine and smelled really good. For a minute or two, it looked like the old pig might make the transformation into a civilized pig, but as soon as the front door was opened, the pig ran outside and jumped into the first mud hole she saw.

You see, she was still a pig. She had changed on the outside, but not on the inside where it counts. Her nature hadn't changed.

Now, take a lamb. You can clean up a lamb and put her in the living room and treat her like family. When the lamb goes outside, she'll do her best to avoid the mud holes. Why? Because the lamb has a different nature than the pig.

People are like that. We can dress up, make ourselves look pretty or handsome on the outside. We can sit in the front pew of the church and we can look like a saint. But, put us back in our office or work place the next day or in our home or on a golf course and our true nature is likely to come out. Pig or lamb?

Being *born again* is an inside job. It's a change that happens on the inside when we invite Jesus into our lives.

Being *born again* is to be washed in the blood of Jesus. Look at the bulletin insert again and find the old song called, '*Are You Washed in the Blood*'? Let's sing.

**"Are you washed in the blood, in the soul cleansing blood of the Lamb? Are your garments spotless? Are they white as snow? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?"**

Washed in the blood, means that our sins have been forgiven. It means that Jesus sacrificed his life for our life on the cross. It means that

Jesus made the sin payment for us. It means we've been washed from the inside out.

A man had been *born again* during another revival service. Now, he had been known as the town drunk. Everybody called him '*Old John*' because with John it was always the same old thing . . . drink, drink, drink.

A few days after that revival meeting, someone saw him on the street and called out to him, "**Good morning, Old John.**"

John stopped and turned to the other person and said, "**Are you talking to me? My name isn't 'Old John' anymore. I'm 'New John'!**"

This is how we'll know if we've been *born again*. There's a turn-around or transformation between our old ways and our new ways . . . between the old self and the new self.

Another way of telling if we've been *born again* is that there'll be a desire to serve and obey God. In I John 2:3 we're told, "**Now by this we may be sure that we know him, if we obey his commandments.**"

There's also going to be a desire to watch out for and avoid the things of this world that act to separate us from God and from each other. The Bible says in I John 2:15: "**Do not love the world or the things in the world. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world.**"

There's also going to be a greater love in our hearts for other people. The Bible tells us: "**We know that we have passed from death to life because we love one another**" (I John 3:14).

So, is being *born again* worth the trouble? I mean, is changing our nature and obeying and loving God and loving other people worth the trouble? Is being *born again* worth it?

I thought you'd never ask. There's one last hymn that we haven't sung yet. I think it answers the question for us: "*Is being born again*' worth it?"

Please, take the insert and find *I've Got a Mansion*. Let's sing this song and find out for ourselves. Is changing our nature and loving God

and other people worth it? Let's sing.

**“I've got a mansion just over the hilltop, in that bright land where we'll never grow old. And some day yonder we will never more wander, but walk on streets that are purest gold.”**

So, is it worth it? The answer seems pretty obvious. *'A mansion on a hilltop, streets of gold, a place where we'll never grow old'* . . . what's not to like? But like most things, we have to decide for ourselves.

As you come forward for communion today, ask yourself this question, **“have you been *born again*?”** If you haven't, I can't think of a better time than right now.

On the bottom of our song insert, I've copied a prayer written by Billy Graham. It's his *born again* prayer. Pray this prayer before you come forward for communion or when you go back to your seat. I have a feeling you'll never regret it.

*The Billy Graham Born Again Prayer*

*O God, I am a sinner. I am sorry for my sin. I am willing to turn from my sin. I receive Christ as my Savior. I confess Jesus as Lord. I want to follow Jesus and serve him and others in the fellowship of his church. In Christ's name. Amen.*