



New

Pastor Deone Drake – January 1, 2017

Good morning. So I have with me an Etch-a-Sketch. I borrowed this from Tiffany who is relatively new director of King's World at our Lockport campus. I guess my son Jonathan has different hiring practices than most people, most people ask "are you good at Word, or Excel or Power Point. My son asks show me something on Etch-a-Sketch and maybe we'll hire you. I'm not sure.

But anyway, this was one of my favorite toys when I was a kid. And the reason why I loved the Etch-a-sketch when I was a kid is first of all, you start off with a clean slate. I like that. The second reason why I like an Etch-a-Sketch is because you can draw whatever you want as long as the knobs will allow it. And so I would draw and I would draw on this thing, but I was not drawing a Picasso or a Rembrandt. I'm just not artistic. And so I never really got upset if anybody accidentally or deliberately erased what I had. In fact, most of the time the person that erased it was me, because I really looked at it and I said that you can probably do better than that even though I knew that I couldn't. But it was okay because whatever was on this screen, if I didn't like it all I had to do was shake it and I had a new clean slate.

The reason I use this analogy is because I think that's exactly what most of us think when we think about January 1st. Regardless of what 2016 was for all of us or any of us, when the clock struck midnight last night, we just shook the Etch-a-Sketch of life and started off with a clean slate. There is something within us even though we know that all it is is one day after another, something about us that thinks that just because it is a new year that things will be new. And we want that. I'm not saying that's bad, but we want that. And there is a hope and expectation that 2017 will be new or better or different. As I said, we want that.

And because we want that and we want to do whatever we can to make sure that happens, we make New Year's resolutions. At least a lot of us do. Saw a survey yesterday that said 44% of Americans will make some kind of New Year's resolutions. I'm sure at least at some point, if you didn't do it last night you have in your life made New Year's resolutions. Perhaps they're similar to the ones that I've found made on January 1st, 2016.

Actually, on Friday, January 1st, 2016 ABC News posted these five New Year's Resolutions. Enjoy life to the fullest. Live a healthier lifestyle. Lose weight. Why does that always have to be there, right? Spend more time with family and friends. Save more, spend less. Now maybe you can identify with those five, maybe some of them were the ones that you put down, maybe you put a sixth, that you want to go to church more regularly. How coincidental that your very first opportunity to do that is actually January 1st. I've got to tell you there's fifty-one more to go. Just so you know. All right, let's see how you do.

But whatever New Year's resolutions you made last night or today or at any point in your life, this is the problem with New Year's resolutions and we know there are. There's a couple of problems that I can think of right off the top of my head. Here's one. We don't keep them. And we know we don't. One study said that 8% of all the people who make New Year's resolutions keep them with any degree of consistency. Another study said that 25% of us will discard, abandon our New Year's resolutions by Saturday. By the end of this week. So one of the problems we have with New Year's resolutions is that we don't keep them. We just don't.

There's another problem. The older we get... I'm not talking about you, I'm talking about me. The older we get the harder it is to change. We're creatures of habit. And so the older we get the harder it is for us to change even though we want to. Take number three, that blasted number three about lose weight. I actually weigh 55 pounds less than I did on April of 2012. Thank you, thank you very much. That was a much weaker applause than I got at the 9:00 service, but that's okay. Thank you, thank you. Thank you.

Now let me tell you my diet plan, you won't be clapping. Because I know that some of you will want to corner me in the atrium afterwards and say "please tell me how you lost 55 pounds over the last four and a half years". Here it is. Get an abscess in your back, fluid around your lungs, be in such back pain for four months that you have absolutely no appetite and have thoracic surgery and you'll lose 55 pounds. That's my diet plan. I'm sticking to it.

Now the recovery has gone well, no complaints here. But here's the deal. The scale has not moved one pound since I've left the hospital on June 30th, 2013. I weigh exactly the same, despite thousands of miles and I mean thousands of miles on my bike and hitting the gym I weigh the exact same that I did when I left the hospital. Why? Because my metabolism is stubborn. Just like the other parts of me that want to change. The older we get the harder it is for us to change.

Let me pull back the Etch-a-Sketch and show you something that perhaps you've forgotten. When you pull the Etch-a-Sketch out of that Christmas box it's got a fresh brand new screen. But when you've drawn on this a lot all of a sudden, just like this one, you begin to see the imprints of things that we drawn on it before. And even though I want 2017 to be different, I realized something last night. When the clock struck midnight, this has been the 58th time that I've shaken this thing. And even though I want to be different, even though I want my life to be different there's some imprints on years gone by that just don't shake off that easily anymore.

Now, after that uplifting start, how many of you want to go home and tear up your New Year's resolutions, pull the blanket over your head and wait it out until January 1st, 2018 when we can have a different kind of conversation? I'm being honest with you. There's something inside of me that says I hope so. Because as good as it is to make New Year's resolutions, there is someone who I want to introduce into this conversation who has something a whole lot better for us than New Year's resolutions that we typically make and don't keep. Nothing

wrong with you and I wanting to be better. There's nothing wrong with wanting to be a new you by Friday. There's something wrong with not letting God speak into this because I have to tell you He does.

In fact, I'd like to suggest to you that God is much more interested in your change than you ever could be. And interested in a change much deeper than you could ever accomplish. But when we talk about "I want to be new, I want to be different, I want to be better", there are some things out of Scripture that I have to remind you of, that I have to remind myself of as far as what it means to be new on this New Year's day.

Here's the first. I'm making an idea here. God has made you new. For the person who knows Christ, for the person who has turned their life over to Christ, you and I need to be reminded of this. God has already made you new. Paul says it this way in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation as come. The old has gone, the new is here!" God has already made you new.

Now it's interesting to me in that verse that Paul could have used two different Greek words for the word "new". One word is neos and it refers to new in relationship to time. I would use it this way, this shirt that I'm wearing is new, I got it for Christmas. These shoes are a little bit older. He could have used that word but he didn't. He used the second Greek word, the Greek word is kainos. One lexicon says that it refers to "new" in relationship to quality, and says it this way: New in the sense that you are something you were not before.

And so when Paul says: "Therefore if anyone is in Christ the new creation is come" he mean this, you are new in the sense that you are something you were not before. Before what? Before you gave your life to Christ.

In what way? This service doesn't have enough minutes in it for me to tell you in what way are you new. Let me just highlight a few. You were dead in trespasses and sins. You are now alive. You were an enemy of God, now you are a friend of God, you were an object of His wrath, now you are a recipient of His kindness. You were filled with sin, now you are the righteousness of God in Christ. You were without hope in this world, now you have a living, breathing hope. You were an orphan and now you've been adopted into the family of God. You had no reason to have security and now you are secure because you are in Christ.

You see, God has made you new and God doesn't tell you these things that I've just mentioned except that they be transformative in your life as you embrace them and place the full weight of your confidence on them as truth. Because the God who says these things, He doesn't lie.

Paul says it this way in Titus. "In the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time..." and I need to remind myself, maybe halfway through this year, that these things are true for the one who is struggling in their identity, I don't know who you are, you can start here. God has made you new.

But let me continue that sentence, God has made you new and God is making you new. He is in the process of making you new. John writes it

this way in Revelation 21: "He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Yes, it is at the last book of the Bible, and yes it is talking about that eternal state. As Pastor Jerry has said it, our hope is not in heaven, our hope is in the resurrection because Jesus Christ got out of the grave so we too someday will get up out of our grave and we will be in a resurrected body that is not tainted by sin or death or disease anymore.

But please do not think that God is waiting until that day to do a work in you. He is making you new, He is reconciling all of you to Christ and that makes a difference. At least it should. The God of the universe is at work in your heart. As our founding Pastor, James Andrews used to say it, "how could the God who created this world out of nothing enter into your heart through the new birth and not make an incredible difference?". God is making you new.

That's why Jeremiah could say that the mercies of God are new every morning. Every day is an opportunity for you to experience the newness, not just on January 1st, but every day the newness of God's mercies as He completes and does His work in you.

So if that's true, if God has made you new and if God is making you new, what is the appropriate response? In fact, what is the only response? Let me finish the sentence...let Him. If God has made you new, and if God is making you new, then let Him...allow Him to. And I'm not just talking about throwing up your hands and saying okay God, if that's what you want to do, go ahead. I'm talking about an active, joyful willing

participation in the work of God to make me be something that I was not before. I need to let Him.

Paul said it this way, you all know this verse. "Being confident of this very thing, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." So, we need to let Him.

I was significantly changed years ago by the Bible Study "Experiencing God" by Henry Blackaby. I know many of you have taken that Study as well. Here's the basic premise of that Study: Find out what God is doing and join Him. That's exactly what I'm saying. If God has made you new and if God is making you new, then we need to join Him in what He's doing.

No one ever said it better than the apostle Paul when he wrote these words in the same book, Philippians 2: "Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed--not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence--continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill His good purpose." We'll talk at the end of this message what that good purpose is. But Paul says something. God is working in you and we are to work out. We are to participate. We are to let Him make us new.

Let me in this brief time give you three ways that I think that we can do that. Here's the first. Let Him make you new in places no one can see, but everyone will know. Let Him make you new in places that no one can see, but everyone will know.

Think of your typical New Year's resolutions through the lens of this passage that I want to show you in just a minute. God is speaking to Samuel about the next king who of course will be David, and he writes these words: "The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

So think about your New Year's resolutions in that way. There are things that people can see. I want to enjoy life to the fullest. Well, you're going to be able to pretty much figure out by February whether or not I'm doing that. You'll see that on my face whether I'm really enjoying life. Something you can see. I want a healthier lifestyle. You're going to also be able to see that in the choices I make with eating or exercise or whatever I'm doing you'll be able to see that. I want to lose weight. You'll be able to very quickly whether or not I'm doing that. I want to spend more time with my family. You're going to be able to see that. My family's going to be able to see whether or not I'm spending more time with them. Saving more money. Spending less money. My bank account will reveal, people can see whether or not I'm living by those resolutions.

But God wants to do a work in your heart that no one sees. But believe me, when He does that work everyone around you will know it. For example, God wants to renew your mind. God wants to change the way you think. Paul said it this way in Romans 12:2: "Do not be conformed to this world." Don't allow - another translation says it "Don't allow the world to squeeze you into it's mold so that you're thinking the way the world thinks but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." There

it is "and then you're going to be able to test and prove what God's will is, His good, pleasing and perfect will."

Some of us say I want to know God's will, but we won't allow God to shape our thinking to be like His. But God wants to renew your mind. I need to tell you that doesn't happen in view of anyone else. It happens in your time alone with Him. As you get into His Word and learn that the language of the Holy Spirit is the voice that emanates from the pages of this Book. As you meditate on it day and night, as the psalmist has said, He will slowly change your mind to care more for spiritual things than you do for worldly things.

That's why we gave you this reading plan. You don't have to as Jay has already mentioned, you don't have to stick to this plan, but have a plan to be regularly, consistently, habitually in God's Word so that He can begin to change the way you think.

One of the greatest blessings of my what--life is my wife. And yesterday when I pulled myself away to go over this message again, my wife texted me and said I just finished Revelation 22, meaning that starting on January 1st in 2016 she had gone through and read through the Bible all the way through like she did the year before and the year before and the year before. And I do not want you to think that this is a spiritual checklist, this is something I've done. No, this is precious to me, this is holy to me, this is time alone in God's Word where He can begin to change the way I think. Because when He changes the way I think, believe me, no

one will see it, no one will be in that secret place with me and God, but everyone will know it. Everyone will know it.

I played the clarinet when I was a kid and an uncle that was a professional pianist and he would remind me that I needed to practice, that I needed to be alone and play that instrument and he says, if you don't practice one day, you'll know it. If you don't practice two days your family will know it and if you don't practice three days, everyone will know it. That's true. You and I will give off signals as to whether or not we are alone with God, even though no one see the time we are alone with God, everyone will know it. Because God wants to do a work in you and He will do it in secret.

Here's the second thing. Let Him make you new in ways that you can't control so you need to surrender. Let Him make you new in ways that you can't control so you need to surrender.

There's something consistent about all five of those resolutions that I mentioned and others that you could mention. I'm in the driver's seat on all of them. I am. Yes, there are variables. My desire to live life to the fullest in 2017 can be offset by a bad doctor's report. My desire to lose weight can be offset by being married to someone who last night made me brownies with walnuts and chocolate frosting on top. There are variables to that. My desire to save more and spend less can be offset by a financial crisis that I didn't see coming. But at the end of the day, for the most part, I'm in the driver's seat on my New Year's resolutions. And again, that's okay. Do not mishear me. Nothing wrong with those kinds

of resolutions. It's just that God wants to do a deeper work and the best thing for you to do regarding that work is surrender.

That's because there are things about me and there's certainly things about you that I cannot change by myself, that you cannot change by yourself. Not by will power and not by trying harder. And that takes a lot of the New Year's resolutions right out the window, doesn't it? Because I'll guarantee if you made a New Year's resolution somewhere along the line you were saying I'm going to try harder. I made a New Year's resolution to lose weight in 2016, I weigh the exact thing that I did on January 1st. This year is going to be different. I'm going to try harder. But there are parts of me that I cannot change no matter how hard I try. For example, I cannot change who I basically am. The person, the disposition, I cannot change who I am.

Jeremiah said it this way: Can an Ethiopian change his skin? The answer is no. Can a leopard its spots? The answer is no. Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil. There are parts of me that I cannot change no matter how hard I try. And how do I know that? Because I've tried. And you've tried. And you've tried. And you've pledged. And you've said I'm going to be different. I promise I'll be different. I'll be different. And it hasn't worked because there are parts of you that you cannot change by yourself, no matter how hard you try, no matter how much willpower you have.

Do you want an example? I can't change what I do with my tongue. I can't change what I do with my tongue. My goodness - my tongue

sometimes is raw from biting it so hard, because I'm not going to say the wrong thing, and I say the wrong thing. And I'd love to be different. In fact, let me ask you or make a challenge. You can stand right now if in 2016, you never said one thing that you wished you hadn't said. I'll give it to you easier. You can stand if in 2017, this first day, you haven't said something that you wished you hadn't said. And I don't know how - good for you. There's a liar in the group.

I don't know how many times I have vowed to myself and others that I'm going to be different, but a reality check - here's the reality check. James 3:8 - no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. I can't change, by myself, with the right amount of willpower, and trying harder to control my tongue.

You hear a lot of talk about addiction, and as you've entered 2017 maybe you're carrying into 2017 an addiction to something. I hope you realize by now that it's not something you can change on your own. We think if we just try harder this time, 2017's going to be the year that I break the habit of... that we'll conquer it. That won't work. Let me tell you why it won't work. Let me tell you how I know it won't work. It hasn't worked. But Jesus can set you free.

Hear the gentle difference in these words: people talk about being in recovery all the time - and by the way, we're for it. But let me ask you a question. How much recovery time is in these words by Jesus? Go and sin no more. You see the resurrection of Jesus Christ holds out the hope that Jesus can and he does break the power of sin and He'll set you free if

you let Him do a work in you that you can't control, and in fact opposite to what we think, it happens when we stop trying hard and fully surrender.

Here's the way Paul said it in Romans 6: Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. If Paul were writing in the 21st century he would say this: Don't allow the parts of your body to be a launching pad for sin. Rather allow the parts of your body to be used as an instrument, as a launching pad for righteousness.

How does that come about? It comes about by offering the same words that Jesus spoke in the garden: Not my will but yours. And I train myself to submit to God's work in my life by saying those words. I really want - I really want to say this thing - this angry word, this sarcastic word, this bitter word - I really want to say it. I really want to put this person in their place. But not my will but Yours. I really want to do this thing because it will make me feel good. But not my will, but Yours. I really want to have this drink. I really want to engage in this habit. But not my will but Yours. You see it is surrender to Him. It is surrender to Him.

There's a third thing I want to offer to you. Let Him make you new by making you like Jesus. Let Him make you new by making you like Jesus.

Some of those New Year's resolutions that we talked about at the beginning are a little ambiguous and hard to have concrete goals like I want to live life to the fullest. How will I know that I've reached that? It's

a little ambiguous. Some of them are very specific. I want to lose weight and I have a specific number and it's none of your business. Some of them are very specific.

But when it comes to God, He has a very clear goal in mind for you and there's no confusion. It's a passage of that Pastor Wes used a couple weeks ago. Romans 8: We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. 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.

There's three buckets that I can put that passage of Scripture in - all things working together for good, to accomplish the purpose of God, which is to make me like Christ. All things working in my life, for the very purpose of God, which is to make me like Christ. There are two things that I am absolutely certain will happen in your life in 2017 if you know Jesus Christ. It's not because I'm clairvoyant. It's because I know this passage of Scripture.

The first thing I know about your life and mine for 2017 is that there are going to be things that will happen in your life that are good and bad and plenty in between. Just look back at 2016 and you know I'm right. There are things that were good, things that were bad, things that are in between. And somehow God uses all of those things to accomplish His purpose.

The very best analogy I ever heard about this passage that helps me explain it is baking a cake from scratch. And you line up all of the ingredients in baking a cake from scratch. And you have those same three categories. You have the good, you have the bad by themselves, and you have the in between. Not good or bad, they just are. Over here you have flour. It's not really good - it's not nasty by itself - it just is. Water - it just is. You have some things over here that are good - like sugar.

Now kids, I don't know if you do this when you go to a restaurant like I did when I was a kid (and actually I still do). There's a packet of sugar on the table. You take one, rip it open, you eat it! Because sugar's good and you wonder why you're a diabetic, right?

So there's some things that are good, some things that are - they just are. There's some things that are bad. Like I don't know how many of you sickos eat a raw egg. I know there's some who do. Sorry, I hope I didn't offend you. But it's nasty is what it is. It's nasty.

And how about Baker's Chocolate? My very first job I had was working at Tops when I was right out of high school. And one time I was working on the floor and I was absolutely famished so I ran to the back room where items had been broken open by customers and normally we could help ourselves and there was this candy bar and I just reached for that candy bar - boy was I hungry - and I just bit into it. It was Baker's Chocolate. I swear it was 7 months and 3 days before I got the taste out of my mouth. It's something that's nasty.

But see - you've got good, you have bad, you have in between. You put it together and you let the oven do its job and it comes out a wonderful tasting cake. And somehow that's exactly what Paul says. You look at the good things that will happen in your life, the bad things, and just ordinary life in and you put it all together and somehow God is able to use it to accomplish His purposes. That's one thing I know about your life in 2017 - there will be good, there will be bad, and it will be in between.

Here's the second thing I know: God will use all of those things that will happen in 2017 if you let Him to make you like Jesus. God will use all of the things that will happen in 2017 if you let Him to make you like Jesus. I already know from this passage that that's what He wants to do if you'll let Him, if you'll actively participate in that, if you will let Him, He will make you like Christ. That's why a believer who really understands what God's doing never has to ask the question why is this happening to me? I don't know all the reasons why this is happening to you but I know one: He's making you like Jesus if you'll let Him. And that's the key - that's where we are right now. To evaluate our own hearts. If God has made me new, if God is making me new and if I am to let Him I know what He's doing. He's trying to make me like Jesus if I'll let Him and that is the critical question this morning. Will you?

I have a 28 month old granddaughter Giovanna Rose. And she is obsessed with Play-Doh. I mean obsessed. It's all she talks about. I've picked her up a couple times from daycare. And I ask her - the first question - what did you do today? It doesn't matter what else she did.

Here's what I hear: I play with Play-Doh. She loves Play-Doh and in her own 28 month old mind she wants to make certain things out of Play-Doh. But here's one thing I know about this Play-Doh. In order for her to make anything out of it, it has to be soft. It has to be pliable. It has to be moldable. And this in many ways describes your heart and mine.

Because if God wants to make us like Christ, then our hearts need to be soft and moldable and pliable and willing to bend and yield to the work that He wants to do in our lives. This is soft Play-Doh.

In my other hand I also have Play-Doh. This is a gift from Giovanna's other grandmother - grandma Chelle as she calls her, Michelle, Gabe's mom. This is also Play-Doh. The only difference between this and this is this has been baked. This is a Christmas ornament, a bell, and believe me, the time to shape this into whatever else you would want to shape is gone because it's hard. And the only way that this is going to be anything different is if I drop it and smash it into a million pieces. But if I don't, for as long as it exists, it will be this shape. It can't be something different because it's too hard.

Have I just described some of you? Are there parts of your heart that are not like this but they're like this? Are there people in this audience who would say I'm the same person I was January 1, 2016 and I'm going to be the same person on January 1, 2018 and 19 and 20 and until I go home to be with the Lord I'm not changing? Are there parts of your heart that God has been trying to get your attention in saying I want to change you but your heart is too hardened?

We've developed a way at least to begin that process. Also in your monthly bulletin there's a 14 day challenge. Fourteen verses that we came up with from Scripture designed for you and me to look at our own hearts and ask the question is it a hard heart or is it a soft heart? For example the very first verse is create in me a clean heart.

Here's what we want you to do. For the next 14 days - there's a verse for each day - we want you to silence your phones, get into your secret place, your alone time with God where no one can disturb you and for at least 30 minutes focus on this particular verse for that day. Meditate on it through the day. Ask God to show you something that He wants to change in you and then submit to it. It's a challenge because it's going to be difficult because there are parts of you that you may have wanted to change but you can't but there are parts of you that He wants to change if you'll let Him.

So this is the challenge for you - to spend some alone time with God and find out what God wants to say to you about who you are and what He wants to change in you. And when He does that, we want you to tell someone. Email me or a pastor you're most comfortable emailing and tell us this is what God did in my life over these 14 days to change me into the likeness of Christ. This is what He wants to do with you.

I want to sing a song together, a declaration of our faith that Jesus Christ can change us if we'll allow Him to. Will you stand with us as we respond in worship and we call on the name of Jesus and we ask Him to change us this morning.

We've had in this service some wonderful young people who are normally children normally in King's World and we thank you for behaving so wonderfully. And so we have a gift for you if you are a child - sorry - only if you're a child. We have a canister of Play-Doh for you. As you leave the ushers will give you that. And you go home and you make whatever you dream up to make with your Play-Doh. Adults - let's be the Play-Doh. Soft and moldable so God can shape us into His likeness. Would you pray with me?

God, for today, the verse create in me a clean heart. Maybe there's some things that we've dragged into 2016 that need to be left behind. And our prayer as we bow before you is for You to create a new heart in us. You promised to do that if we will come to you to cleanse us and forgive us and wash us clean. And then it says to renew a steadfast heart. Maybe, Lord, some of us have just not walked as close to you as we should and today, because it's a new day for us and a new year, it seems like the perfect time for us to fully surrender to you and to renew that relationship with you. For whatever work that you want to do in us, Lord, it is because there are people who desperately need to see Jesus in us. So shape us, Lord, just like this clay. Shape us into Your likeness so that people can see Jesus in us. And we know, Lord, that that will bring glory to You and that is our New Year's resolution and our everyday resolution - to make people see Jesus in us. Would you do that, Lord, for Your glory and our good? And we pray this in Christ's name. Amen.

Blessed New Year to you. Thank you.