

## 11.11.20 – A Weekly Word for Covenant Church

**Title:** Repentance Means Change

**Scripture Reading:** [Acts 3:17-21 & 4:8-13](#)

**Reflection:** Rev. George Vink

Pastor Henry Lyte lay dying when he wrote the familiar hymn, “Abide with Me.” We hear it in the words:

“Hold thou thy cross before my closing eyes.

Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies.”

In an earlier stanza, the pastor described life. You may have felt that way, or still do.

“Swift to its close ebbs out life’s little day;

earth’s joys grow dim, its glories pass away.

Change and decay in all around I see.

O thou who changes not, abide with me.”

In these last lines, one might just get the idea that change is not a good thing! God’s not changing is essential to our understanding of his being God. But it’s not so for us. God expects changes from followers of Jesus! John the baptizer preached it, leaving little doubt: “Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.” ([Mt. 3:8](#)) Repentance not a one-time event, but a life-long process. But, if done sincerely, we can get better at it. And there’s obviously a need for our doing so!

Now in the midst of a deadlier-than-ever pandemic, yet delightedly done with months of tiring electioneering, hopefully, we could find ourselves wondering, “Of what do I need to repent?” Adam-like, we prefer to blame others for wrongs we’ve done or continue doing. Repentance doesn’t come readily or naturally for many of us. We may even deny any need to do so. After all, we’re confident our motives are good and we think more clearly than friends, some now-former friends, who think differently, don’t we? Further, it’s human nature to process change as loss, and thus various emotions may accompany our undergoing needed changes.

With that understanding in mind, I believe Henri Nouwen’s insight is helpful, “Your whole life is filled with losses, endless losses. And every time there are losses there are choices to be made. You choose to live your losses as passages to anger, blame, hatred, depression, and resentment, or you choose to let these losses be passages to something new, something wider, and deeper.” Wow! Easier said or read than done! Repenting means changes in life style, attitude, vocabulary. We must do so and can do so when we’re committed to do so based on our relationship with Jesus. The betrayer-of-Jesus Peter demonstrates this for us.

In Acts 4, Luke writes that the rulers and elders saw their relationship in action. “When they saw the courage of Peter and John...they took note that these men had been with Jesus.” It’s the “having been with Jesus” that made the difference, leading to an enviable boldness. It can also make our changing a reality. When we need to repent of the attitudes displayed towards those who think differently, whether political, habitual, or doctrinal, we can do so by “having been with Jesus.” It could mean asking “Would I say that if Jesus were sitting at the table with us?” or, “If I asked Jesus to come along, would he?”

Like my mother’s always knowing that she could tell with whom I’d been hanging, can our friends tell that we’ve been “hanging with Jesus,” just like Peter and John? Can you? Does it give us the courage to be what Jesus wants us to be and repent of our actions and attitudes? Needed and sincere repenting will lead to asking and

receiving forgiveness, resulting in the restoration of relationships reflecting the resurrection power Peter preached and promised. It's our call!

But, do we have a choice?

**Prayer:**

Gracious God of restoration, grant us the power of Your Spirit to do what we're called to do, without backtalk or hesitation. We're sinful children and we need Your forgiveness that Peter promised then and has been powerfully proclaimed since. Help me look at my life, not my neighbor's or friend's, and see what I need to change, where and when I need to repent. I truly want to do so...today! AMEN.

**Action Item for the Day/Week:**

Look for a small step to make that'll embolden you to take a bigger one. The joy of repentance and resulting joy and forgiveness are great motivators towards the large one you know that you need to make....soon!

**Songs for today:**

[Just As I Am](#)

[Have Thine Own Way, Lord](#)

[Create In Me A Clean Heart, O God](#)