



# New Day Church

Need a fresh start?

## THE WHOLE STORY

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Well if you weren't sure at the beginning of the week, I'm sure you realized half way through that summer is definitely approaching. That was some June heat wave, wasn't it? It turned out to be kind of a teaser, but it was definitely a sign that the seasons are changing. Now if you're one of those people who's a little slower to pick up on the cues, here are a few other ways you can recognize when it's summer:

If you find hot water coming out of both taps, it's probably summer.

If you realize that you're choosing parking places based on shade rather than distance from the store, it's probably summer.

When you see a bird using potholders to pull a worm out of the ground, it's probably summer.

And if you notice back to school sale ads in your Sunday paper, it's DEFINITELY summer.

We even have a few signs that it's summer right here at New Day. I mean, just look around. You can see that people have started wearing their casual clothes to church instead of their normal Sunday best...we like to think it's always summer at New Day.

But we do have a few things we do differently during the summer. Sunday school changes up. Classes combine. In the past, the kids have had treasure hunts and beach parties in class. Some summers we've had Sunday morning concerts. Crazy things like tiny rocks on the chairs. And I've even been known to cut loose a little with my sermons, stir the pot a little bit. That's exactly what we're doing over the next couple months, trying something new, and I'm very excited about it. I'm going to be tag-teaming with Bill Bedell on a sermon series we're calling, "The Whole Story: Moving Beyond Brokenness."

Many of us these days feel defeated and hopeless. That's been a theme we've touched on over the last several months. People here are going through every kind of crisis you can name. And for some of us, believing in Jesus hasn't seemed to translate into any big difference in our day to day existence. The same old struggles trip us up. The same old problems are just as overwhelming as ever. Karin and I were talking a while ago and she said, "I just want to see where God is winning."

As my little Nacho Libre key chain says, “Aren’t you tired of getting kicked in the face? I am.” I believe the Bible shows us where the victory is. We CAN be moving toward spiritual and emotional wholeness and health. We CAN see progress in our struggles. There is greater freedom and hope than we normally settle for.

It’s not that we just pray a prayer and experience some miraculous deliverance. Most problems we’ve been carrying for years don’t vanish in an instant. That’s not usually how God works. But – the good news is that he has much more in mind for us than we do for ourselves, and a normal Christian life is one that is always moving further from brokenness and closer to wholeness.

Bill is a perfect partner for this kind of series. For one, he’s a counselor by profession. He’s in the business of helping people heal and find wholeness. He’s also a gifted communicator. But I think most powerful of all is his own journey toward that wholeness and how clearly he sees Jesus in it. So I’m thrilled you’ll have the chance to hear from him in the coming weeks.

This morning, my goal is to lay some groundwork for the rest of the series. What do we mean when we talk about brokenness and wholeness? What is really involved in a journey toward emotional and spiritual health?

There’s a chapter in Isaiah that God really has been using to speak to me as I have been thinking about this series, and it makes a great launch pad for our discussion. But I want to come at it sort of sideways, because I want to begin with a story from Christ’s life where he quotes from the same chapter of Isaiah. As he was travelling around preaching throughout Galilee, Jesus made a return trip to his home town, and this is what happened.

#### **Luke 4:16-30**

*He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:*

*"The Spirit of the Lord is on me,  
because he has anointed me  
to preach good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners  
and recovery of sight for the blind,  
to release the oppressed,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

*Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."*

*All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked.*

*Jesus said to them, "Surely you will quote this proverb to me: 'Physician, heal yourself! Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.'"*

*"I tell you the truth," he continued, "no prophet is accepted in his hometown. I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed—only Naaman the Syrian."*

*All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff. But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.*

Imagine for a minute that it's not close to summer at all. Imagine that it's January 19<sup>th</sup> – Martin Luther King Day. Let's say I come up here and play a portion of Dr. King's famous "I Have A Dream Speech" for you. Then I stop the recording, look at you and say, "Today, that dream has come true. Right here in this very place. Because of me."

That would catch you off guard, wouldn't it? I mean, maybe if I was President Obama, I could get away with saying something like that. But what credibility does a little suburban white boy have for making a statement like that?

That's maybe somewhat close to the way the crowd felt that day as they listened to Jesus make this shocking claim. Nazareth was a small town. And when I say small, I mean very. We're talking about a population of around 200. Think Walnut Grove from Little House on the Prairie. There's the little village synagogue in the middle of town where a crowd has gathered on this particular Sabbath. Mary and Joseph's boy is back in town, and everybody is curious about him since he's been away and there have been rumors about him doing some crazy things. He's kind of a celebrity. So they gather around and listen.

You can feel all eyes on him, soaking in every word as he reads from the scroll of Isaiah. Then he rolls it back up. And then in that tiny little synagogue in that tiny little town, he makes one of the biggest, most earth shattering statements ever: This is the year of the Lord's favor. This is the time everyone has been waiting for. God is fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah right here and right now in this very room. I'm the one this passage is about.

You can almost hear the crickets chirping as that idea hangs in the air. It's a lot for this little town to process. How could this possibly be the case? They had known this boy all his life.

This is a crowd that thinks they know Jesus. But it was before he healed the blind, the lame, the leprous. Before he calmed the sea, before he fed the 5,000 and forgave sins, before he explained the Scriptures and fulfilled prophecies. Before he went to the cross for their sins and mine. They did not know who he was and couldn't fathom how he could say what he did. But what he said was still true.

Let's just backtrack for a moment to take in the enormity of Jesus making this claim about what's written in Isaiah. Because if it's true, if it's really about him, then the way we read and interpret it is going to change. Instead of being just a dream for someday in the future, it's a reality we can claim for the present. Today. This summer. And the question is, will you believe him? Maybe you think you already know what he's capable of and it doesn't include radically changing your life. You think, "Well, I prayed and nothing happened." Personal experience falls short of what Jesus has said, and you're left with a choice as to which you're going to trust.

I'd like to just point out three foundational principles from this story to help us sort things out. First, **Wholeness is God's agenda for us.** Do you believe that?

According to Isaiah, God specifically assigned Jesus a task, and that was to announce good news. The poor would find relief. The brokenhearted would be healed up. Prisoners would regain freedom.

God's desire is for us to no longer be controlled and oppressed by our circumstances. We often forget that side of salvation. When we put our faith in Christ, usually the main thing we're thinking about is **Pardon**. I know I need forgiveness, so I come to God for mercy. I claim Jesus as my substitute when he died on the cross. He removed the sin barrier between me and God, and I'm so grateful for that. It's like he wiped the slate clean, and every time I mess up, what he did is still big enough to cover it. I'm pardoned.

But salvation isn't only about having our record cleared. It's also about **Transformation**. Moving from our current state to a new one. God's intention for us is to be changed and shaped by him.

## **2 Corinthians 3:18**

*And as the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like him and reflect his glory even more.*

Glenn Loury is a professor of economics at Brown University. As he tells the story of his own conversion, he says, "Perhaps the most compelling evidence that one can offer that Jesus Christ is Lord is the evidence that derives from one's own life."

He was married, but he said, "I was unable to be faithful to that relationship. I was unable to be present emotionally. I was dead in spirit, despite the fact that I had professional success as a professor at Harvard...I was in slavery to drugs and alcohol. I thought I needed to intoxicate myself in order to enjoy an evening's entertainment, to

enliven a visit with my family, to have fun at a party, and so on...There seemed to be no inner brakes.”

It got so bad that he wound up in a substance abuse program in a psychiatric hospital. Every Friday, people from local churches would come in and talk to patients about spiritual issues. A woman invited him to come to church on Easter when he got out, which he did. He writes, “The sermon was about redemption. I wept quietly for two hours, thinking of all that I had done for which I needed to be forgiven. I did not go to the altar for prayer; I did not join the church or confess Christ as my personal Savior. I fled from that sanctuary as quickly as possible when the service had ended, not even thinking the woman who had invited me.

But that marked the start. He eventually accepted Christ into his life and began to experience the transformation we’ve been talking about. His relationships came back to life. His marriage did a 180. He lost the pride that had been driving him in his work. He gained a sense of meaning and purpose. He says, “Life has such a sweetness. Instead of “Life has no meaning,” my wife Linda now sometimes overhears me saying, “Thank you, Lord.”

People all over this room can identify with Professor Loury, because that’s God’s agenda for each of us – restoration to who we were meant to be. His desire is our wholeness.

**Jesus makes that wholeness a reality.**

Jesus declared straight out that he was the one Isaiah was talking about. He was ushering in the year of the Lord’s favor. He initiated a new era, and we are still living in the year of the Lord’s favor. On this side of the cross we can claim that truth for ourselves.

**Colossians 1:22**

*But now, by giving himself completely at the Cross, actually dying for you, Christ brought you over to God's side and put your lives together, whole and holy in his presence.*

God desires for us to be whole and holy, and he made a way for that to be true in Jesus.

This is the central message we will keep returning to over the next several weeks. Wholeness is not a pie in the sky concept. It’s not wishful thinking. It is a legitimate offer from God, grounded firmly in what Christ has already done for us.

This is for us people! We can bank on it and live by it. And yet, that’s certainly not how it looks much of the time.

Think about the reaction of the first people who heard Jesus make this claim. They ended up wanting to kill him.

**Just because it’s a reality doesn’t mean we experience it automatically.**

What was it that made the people in Nazareth so mad? They seemed to be nodding along with Jesus just fine when he first started talking. They liked the idea of the good news he mentioned. It was only when they saw where they personally fit in the story that they got angry. They didn't like the implication that they had some changing to do.

Christ has announced the truth, but we can still resist it. We can choose not to let him have his way with our hearts.

Dallas Willard grew up on a farm in rural Missouri. It was so remote that they had no electric power for most of his growing up years. Then during his senior year of high school, the Rural Electrification Administration came in and extended their power lines to the houses and farms where he lived. And he said it was amazing how their whole relationship to the world changed – how they related to darkness and light, warm and cold, clean and dirty. But it was still up to each home owner to decide whether or not to take advantage of the electricity. Amazingly, some chose not to. Whether they just didn't want to change or were afraid of the costs, they missed out on all the benefits that would have made life so much better for them.

Christ has brought his power to transform within our reach. So what are we going to do? We can either claim it for ourselves or choose to ignore it. The reality of it and our experience of it are two different things.

With these principles in mind, let's go back now and read a bit more of Isaiah 61.

**Isaiah 61:1-4**

*The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me,  
because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim freedom for the captives  
and release from darkness for the prisoners,  
to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor  
and the day of vengeance of our God,  
to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion —  
to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes,  
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,  
and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.  
They will be called oaks of righteousness,  
a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor.*

*They will rebuild the ancient ruins  
and restore the places long devastated;  
they will renew the ruined cities  
that have been devastated for generations.*

Richard Kriegbaum works for the Fresno Leadership Foundation. In one of his books, he talks about lessons he learned from a Rubik's Cube, and he applied those lessons to a discussion about leadership. They're so good and simple that I decided to steal them and apply them to what we're talking about this morning.

As he was fiddling around with the cube, trying to solve it, he realized that **some things cannot be changed**. The center color on each side determines what color that side needs to be. You can move everything else around in an endless variety of combinations, but the center is always the center. That is what determines what each side should look like.

If Christ fulfills this prophecy in Isaiah, he's the center square. Having him at the core determines the core of everything else. If we've got Jesus in our lives, it is going to radiate out to all these areas

Look at what Isaiah says: Where there is grief, Christ replaces it with comfort. Where there is destruction, he begins rebuilding. Where bad patterns have continued for generations, he says we can break the cycle and have a new start. Where there are wounds he offers healing. Where we are weakened, he gives strength. Where we're marked by shame, he gives dignity and worth. Where we're held captive, he speaks freedom. And where we're impoverished and lacking, he fills us up with plenty.

On the other hand, if we try to center our lives around any of those other squares, it becomes skewed and selfish. Take freedom for example. We all want to feel free, but when that drives us, our perception is distorted. When Glenn Loury talked about his own experience, he said, "I discovered that freedom is not worthy of being one's highest value. My constant quest to be free of constraint, to be unfettered had been the source of much of my unhappiness. Marriage seemed suffocating. I did not want to have children because of the enormous responsibilities. I resented the claims of family and friends if they inconvenienced me."

You could place any of those aspects of wholeness in the middle and find the same thing. Completion is only possible when Jesus is the reference point.

The second thing about a Rubik's Cube is that **You can never change just one thing**. The only way to move one square on any face of the cube involves moving twelve squares. Nothing is done in isolation.

Moving toward wholeness is not always a simple matter. We see one thing in our lives that we want to fix, but transformation has a ripple effect. For example, you might start working on controlling your anger, but the more you dig into it, the more you learn about yourself. Pretty soon you discover that your anger is really stemming from some old wounds that are unresolved and you realize you have some forgiving to do. Or maybe you're fighting an addiction, and the harder you fight, the more you realize you have a control issue.

Whatever the case, being restored is a complex process that is usually far more involved than changing one bad habit. It engages your entire being. But that's the exciting part, because it means the wholeness Christ is offering is so much more full and rich than we initially believed. We go to him for a band-aid, and he looks at us and knows it's going to take surgery to make us well. It may be more painful in the moment, but it is life saving in the long run.

The final lesson Dr. Kriegbaum came to realize is that **You have to give up what you have to get what you want.** He says, "Getting one face of the cube all the same color is not too difficult, but progress beyond that point requires losing part of that beautifully complete face. Most people fail the cube because they cannot destroy the first complete face they achieve. They cling to the lovely but unfinished present and sacrifice the future."

Part of getting to wholeness involves admitting brokenness, and that's a terribly hard thing to do. We like to keep up the good façade, to hang on to whatever progress it looks like we've made so far. Picture all of us desperately working to show the world the one side that looks all together, when there are five other sides of us that are all messed up.

But the truth can set us free. Freedom comes when we realize what we're protecting, working for and lying about is ashes. And Christ invites us to exchange it for true beauty. Take a look again at those last lines we read:

*They will rebuild the ancient ruins  
and restore the places long devastated;  
they will renew the ruined cities  
that have been devastated for generations.*

I love the imagery here. When you look at a picture of ruins that are thousands of years old, it's hard to imagine it ever being restored. It's been too long. Whole chunks have been completely removed. Nobody even knows what the original looked like.

Sometimes that's how we feel about our brokenness. It's been with us for so long that we can't even fathom life on the other side of it. If there's one simple message you walk away with this morning, it's the words of Jesus from the beginning: Today, this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing. Hope for wholeness is solid and sure.

When I was working at the ad agency, one of my clients was International Homes of Cedar, or IHC. They make these gorgeous custom cedar houses. I got to visit several of them, and they were truly amazing. The process for getting your dream home, though, is a little different. Because IHC is a manufacturer, not a builder. They will deliver you a complete package for a home with all the materials you need -- lumber, nails, shingles, windows, you name it. Everything cut to size and ready to go. All that's left is for you to do the work of putting the house together.

## **2 Peter 1:3**

*His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.*

Christ gives us the complete package for experiencing a life of freedom and wholeness and holiness. And we're invited to participate in the rebuilding process.

You may be feeling this morning like you're too worn out to do that much work. You don't have the energy and strength to do your part. But that's not the question today. The question is whether or not Jesus was serious about his fulfillment of Isaiah. Because if he is, he'll provide the strength right along with everything else we need to become what we were meant to be.

Over the next few weeks, we'll start to look at how we can live in light of that truth, how we can get to the work of building. We'll look at emotional health, relationships, getting to know our own stories, finding hope and freedom from shame.

As part of this grand summer experiment, we're also offering some worksheets to go along with each message. This is such a personal type of series that we want to create some tools for you to do some reflection on your own of how it impacts you. I hope you'll take just a few minutes during the week to look it over.

There are no quick fixes or magic bullets. But like the crowd, we have to decide what we're going to believe: what we think we know, or what Christ has said. And what he has said is that the ancient ruins will be rebuilt. Places long devastated will be restored. Stuff that has been wrong forever can still be made right.

What are your ancient ruins? What has been bad for so long that it seems impossible to make good again?

On your chair this morning you may have found a small rock. Hopefully you found it before sitting on it. I know it's really lava rock or something like that, but pretend with me for a moment that it's a tiny chunk of an old brick. That represents something broken, a ruin in your life. What would that symbolize to you? Something in your life that you are struggling with right now. It could be a relationship, a fear, something from your past.

Once you know what it is, we'll take a few moments at the beginning of communion to let you just talk to God about it. Then when you come forward to share the Lord's Supper, bring your rock and trade it in. Exchange your brokenness for Christ's. Leave it with him as you connect again with what he did to restore you. Listen to him saying once again, "This is the year of the Lord's favor. This is the place where you can find everything you need. Let my brokenness bring you wholeness. Let my wounds heal you up."