**John 3:3-6**

Date night with Michelle watching Jumanji.

As we recall from prior weeks we are reminded of the fallen nature of humanity, as Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit. The eating of the fruit created separation from God, and left a gap behind which humanity could not overcome on its own. In the wake of the fall we know that our body, soul/mind, and spirit were affected by the sin that was introduced to the human form. In turning to God we know that He has given us a new spirit, and that the source of that spirit is from Him. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come; the old has gone, the new is here!” Through our relationship with Jesus Christ we have a new fresh beginning. It is where God sees us as a new creation; a creation that finds their origins in Him yet again. We looked at that last week as through God, the one who originally created us, we find ourselves as new creation through him yet again. I gave that piano illustration and the whole play it again discussion. John 3:6 continues to emphasize this idea as we have a new birth and through that we have a new direction that we as Christians should pursue. This is not like the rebuild of the Oilers or the Colorado Avalanche, where every year is going to be a new year where change will actually occur, but it is one where change actually occurs and because of God it is always for the better. In other words we have a general manager/coach that is actually making the right moves to make it so we are victors. In verse 6 we read “Flesh gives birth to flesh, but Spirit gives birth to spirit.” In other words the new birth on which we experience is one that is a spiritual birth that is given to us by God. Not only that but He continues to abide in us, and make it so the old fleshly self has no foothold to stand in our lives. The change upon which we have when we come to Christ should be a significant one, as it changes all aspects of who we are. You see, if we were to look at the world as a whole we would see that through creation we can understand what the outcome of something will be. A male dog and a female dog are going to produce little teeny dogs, cats will produce cats, horses will produce horses, and people will produce people. This should not shock any of you in this room. As we see here through Jesus’ words that which comes out of the natural/fleshly person can produce only that which is natural or fleshly to people. This means that the resulting product of whatever humanity creates already sets it in light of sin. Sorry to Isaiah an Mercy who inherited sinful nature from Michelle and I. We know through Paul’s writings that we have all sinned and fall short of God’s glory.

We as people cannot create a spiritual life; we can’t go to some weird temple and find enlightenment on our own, nor can we retreat to nature and find ourselves as amazing spiritual beings; it just doesn’t work that way. That which we as people produce will always be marred by the fact that we created it. It will always fall short of any perfection or any goodness whatsoever. I just think of the last time I tried to color a nice portrait, oh boy, I still can’t keep my pencil crayons in the line and create a disaster which is far from perfect. God is the one however who creates this new life for us, the one which Jesus states several times to be born again. Being from God means that this is a life or new creation that is drawn to the characteristics of God, and His desires in His life. It is a life that is appalled and disgusted by sin, as His new creation is one that is eternal, and will eventually be void of sin. A.W. Tozer says this: “the Holy Spirit never enters a man and then lets him live just like the world that hates God. That is the real reason most people don’t want to be filled with the Holy Spirit – they want to live the way they want to live…”He continues by saying that “the Holy Spirit must be Lord” of our lives. My professor and friend Bernie Van de Walle writes “Human holiness is attained by the indwelling and manifestation of the life of Christ, the Holy One. The holiness of humanity is nothing other than the holiness of Christ himself. Through the believer’s intimate union with Christ, the holiness of the One who resides within infuses the one who hosts it.” This new creation which we are is one that finds its origins in Christ Jesus.

In looking at the text we see that flesh is a term that is used. This is a word that if tossed around today we would immediately assume skin, or maybe even meat. When looking at the word from a biblical approach we see that it has a bit of a different meaning. Flesh in biblical terms is the whole person, which could mean body, soul/mind and spirit; not only does it mean that, but after the Fall it refers to the pulling of an individual towards the sinful nature. It is like the kid in a candy store with no money and no one watching him; the temptation to munch the candy in that store would be what are fleshly nature would push us towards. I may still be tempted by something like that to tell you the truth, those little gummi cola bottles are so delicious. At this point we could even look at a tug of war battle. These things used to frustrate me like no business, as I was always so tiny, and I still am extremely skinny. Winning one of these is something I just understand will probably not happen, as the goal of a tug of war is to get the marker in the center of the rope to cross onto your team’s side. The opponents in this tug of war though are human nature/ fleshly pull of humanity versus the spirit who is connected with God. When the Fall occurred with Adam and Eve the spirit side was tripped up; a huge gap entered between the relationship humanity enjoyed with God. We pretty much pushed our anchor and star tug of war player off of our team. What was left behind was a shell, and the flesh side of the rope began to win the struggle. The freedom that God gave us was also the freedom we used to kick Him off of our team. We desired to pursue our own desires and our own fleshly ways; instead of living the beautiful life that God had created for us. You all know that I am not a big fan of planes; something happens to you when you are forced to watch video after video of plane issues while working at the airport; but if we were planes, our bodies would be the fuselage (which is the main body of the aircraft) and our spirit was the engine, which kept the plane running and flying. We know that in this scenario the body is useful; just as our human bodies are. The wings help keep the plane in the air, but the majority of the work comes from the engine. If a plane engine craps out, that is big trouble. Just as the plane will struggle and crash, so will our being without the Holy Spirit. We pull to much towards the fleshly and divert attention away from the Spirit, which leads to heartache and heart break. We cannot sustain our lives without the Spirit in us. Our fleshly nature can never be pleasing to God we see that in Psalms 51:5, Ephesians 4:22, Jeremiah 17:9, Mark 7:21-23, and 1 Corinthians 2:14.These are verses that describe us; they describe me and they describe you. They describe every human being since the fall that tore us away from God. Our sinful human nature is one that pursues exactly that; it pursues the flesh. We can produce nothing other than sinful human nature or that of the flesh. A.B. Simpson puts the Spirit filled life this way: “Being filled with the fullness of God is like a bottle in the ocean. You take the cork out of the bottle and sink it into the ocean, and you have the bottle completely full of ocean. The bottle is in the ocean, and the ocean is in the bottle. The ocean contains the bottle, but the bottle contains only a little bit of the ocean. So it is with a Christian.” Our lives need more of God ad less of the human nature; hence we need to be born again, but not of flesh, but by His Spirit.

At times we try to make it seem as though our fleshly nature is not pulling us down or even trip us up. Look at all the self help books available or the many other religious groups that tell you enlightenment is yours for the taking. Any attempt to make ourselves look better than we are without the efforts of the Holy Spirit look no different than the repainting of a well pump. Can you imagine a well with bad water; water that cannot be drunk or even used for cleaning. You take the pump that controls this water; you sand it and paint it a nice, bright, and beautiful color. Taking that rusty pump and making it sparkle. Then you even attach some cosmetics or accessories to the pump, like a gold handle or bedazzling the body of the pump. The pump is so beautiful it becomes the center of art pieces and even the inspiration of poems. The water which the pump pours out is till bad water though. Nothing can change the fact that the water down below is polluted and undrinkable. As we look at society we see little cosmetic changes that we use to try make our water we give out pure; we try every technique we can think of. Our water only becomes pure through the work of Jesus Christ; it doesn’t get better by the way we dress it up or make it appear. So we should ask ourselves what type of water do I have flowing from my pump? Is my pump just made to look cosmetically nice? Are we pumping out pure water to those who are thirsty? Kenneth S. Wuest wrote “Man in his totally depraved condition cannot be improved. Reformation will not change him into a fit subject for the kingdom of God. The flesh is incurably wicked, and cannot by process be changed so as to produce a righteous life. What that person needs, Jesus says, is a new nature, a spiritual nature which will produce a life pleasing to God, and which will be a life fit for the kingdom of God.” He goes onto say Jesus teaches “the new birth is a permanent thing, produces a permanent change in the life of an individual…” Is there new life in us? Is there new life in you? Is the life of God pumping through you? In order to please God, we have to be more than polish or paint, but we have to be new creations which are birthed through Him as we let the life of Christ flow through us.

This is a Spirit filled life; this is the life that Jesus talks about to Nicodemus. We cannot save ourselves through our own efforts, as our efforts produce human results. That is why we must be born again, as new birth is one that is born out of God, which produces God’s results. In this new found birth we have this question of what happens to the old fleshly nature? Right, we were given a new nature, as we are filled with the Holy Spirit, just like that bottle in the ocean. But what happens to that old fleshly nature? Some theologians say it dies immediately; an interesting perspective, however if this were the case why in our new birth do we still stumble or sin. Romans 7:18 “For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.” That’s Paul talking about sinful desires e was still experiencing. Paul’s old nature struggled against the new nature that he now has. We are back to the idea of the tug of war again; only this time we end up choosing which side we want to be on. Do we choose the Holy Spirit and the new creation, or do we choose sin and the old, fleshly nature? This is a daily battle which occurs in us, as we battle back and forth between our fleshly nature and the nature of the Holy Spirit. Over time the more we choose to team up with the Holy Spirit, the closer we will come to Him. Our old nature will lose far more often than it did when we first found Christ. Our old nature will win more often however if it is something we turn to more than the Holy Spirit. Which call are we listening to more often? God gives us His Holy Spirit in order to provide us with a way to resist the fleshly nature of humanity. Romans 6:11 “In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.” God has broken the power of our fleshly ways, and scripture continues to say that in Colossians 3:5-6 “Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.” Through the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives, and connecting with Him on a continual basis, we are given by God, a way to do away with the fleshly nature. The idea of sanctification comes to mind, as over time the Holy Spirit works in our lives to cleanse us more and more. A.B. Simpson would desire for more of the Sprit to fill his life, this is really not a bad thing. If we take a glass of dirty water, and continually add pure water to the glass; eventually the glass will only contain the purified water. Just as we continually pursue the Spirit, so we can cleanse ourselves of impurities. As we display the fruits of the Spirit, allowing our well pumps to shoot out pure water which can help others see that clean water is better than dirty water.