



## **Fresh Starts, and New Beginnings**

By Jarrett Kerbel (10/10/25)

Where to begin? At the beginning, of course.

For me, the beginning that matters most to me - beside my actual birth - is my rebirth in Christ. While at college, the Holy Spirit moved me to take a retreat at a monastery where Jesus met me with the full force of his loving acceptance during the passing of the peace at Eucharist.

Why bring up this new beginning, this genesis of my life as a disciple of Jesus? My conversion experience will help you understand my preaching and my approach to church leadership.

First, the love of God is personal, accepting, and available for all. You will hear me preach about how God is present and we are absent, God is available and we are distracted, God is vulnerable and we are defended. You will see me taking a lot of time getting to know church members, neighbors, and newcomers. Why? Because God loves the unique people God made and wants to work in us and with us to show God's light and love in the world.

Second, the Holy Spirit is the source of new life, new beginnings. No one is condemned or rejected by God in a final way. God's love and forgiveness are always stronger than the worst thing we have ever done or will ever do. You will hear me preach a lot about dying and rising in Christ, dying to our old self so as to grow into the person God designed us to be. We may think we are living a functional life, only to learn that we are hovering over the "life that is life" which God is offering.

Third, Jesus is our steadfast friend and we can always turn to him. The word 'repent' simply means 'turn.' In our use it particularly means 'turn to God.' In every moment of every day we can turn our attention to Jesus when we need him. When tempted to negative or hurtful behavior, turn to Jesus. When swamped with big feelings, turn to Jesus. When tempted to self-destructive thoughts or actions, or when beguiled by the false, dopamine-engaging 'satisfactions' of the world, turn to Jesus.

Fourth, God's grace gives us the capacity to grow. Because God loves us and wants only to love us into freedom, grace gives us increased capacity for growth in character and virtue. When I feel stuck in old patterns, old habits, and frustrated by my limitations, I turn to Jesus to remind myself that my redeemed humanity has plenty of room for creativity and new behaviors each day. Sometimes I picture my body like a thermometer; sure there is a lot of baggage and inertia filling up the pipe, but God is creating space above it for new possibilities! Ask God for growth in prayer, in virtue, in character, and it will come.

I am thrilled to be in ministry with you and I cannot wait to see what the Holy Spirit will make of us.