**I Am**

 I want you to think for me today. I want you to think, not about God, but about yourself…I know, I know…are we allowed to do that in church?? It’s ok, we are. I want you to think about yourself, and how you would describe yourself. Who are you? What are you?

 Towards the end of last school year, I was in a training, and to begin the training, we were given a piece of paper and told to write as many I AM statements as we could think of. With that idea in mind, I want you to take your 2 notecards and on one, write a positive I AM statement and on the other, I want you to write a negative I AM statement (about something that you struggle with) (they do not have to be anything related to church). When you’re done, just hold onto those cards, we will come back to them shortly.

In our training, naturally, many people wrote I AM a teacher…I AM a father or mother…I AM a son or daughter. Funny though, no one wrote I AM a sinner…I AM a failure…I AM a liar. Just because no on wrote those negative things about themselves, does that mean that they aren’t true? Of course not. Romans 3:23 clearly says that…”for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Does this mean that we are destined for hell? YES!! However, can we do something about that? Has God put in place some way for us to avoid that fate? YES!!

 You see, God is here to lift us up, while Satan is here to tear us down. There is no denying it, and no doubt about it, Satan is strong, but MY God…OUR God is stronger. The end of Romans 8:31 says that…”If God is for us, who can be against us?” That verse ends with a question mark, but I think that it should end with an exclamation mark!!

 In this life, it is so easy to be negative. It is so easy to get down on yourself. It is so easy to think that the world is out to get us. Death…sickness…divorce. These are not the things of God, these are the things of Satan. However, God chose us for greater things than we can possibly imagine. Deuteronomy 7:6 speaks a good word. This verse tells us, “The Lord your God…” Who’s God? Your God. My God. “The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be His people, His treasured possession.” Does this verse mean that life is going to be easy? Absolutely not. In fact, if you choose to believe this verse, life is going to be even harder for you, because Satan is going to be constantly knocking on your door. But do we have to answer? Absolutely not!

 Take your negative I AM card, and tear that bad boy in half. Now pitch it. Throw it down. Because the negative things in life do not define us. Our negative thoughts should not define us. Self-doubt should not define us. Our failures do not define us. The world cannot possibly define us. God is the only person that could ever define us. Remember, he chose us above all others to be His. Through Him, I AM saved. Through Him, I AM loved. Through Him, I AM cherished.

 As we get into the message this morning, that is what we are going to focus on. We are going to focus on several I AM statements that we can rely on when times get tough…and trust me, you are going to need these, because if you are living for God, times are bound to get tough.

**I Am a New Person in Christ**

The first I AM statement that I want to look at this morning is, I Am a New Person in Christ. What a wonderful reassurance this is. Even better, is that this statement is a fact, not an opinion. It is fact, because we can read about it in 2 Corinthians 5:17, which reads, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” When we read this, the question that most likely pops into our heads is, what does it mean that someone is in Christ?

To be in Christ, we first have to have some faith and to make a decision. Being in Christ comes from the fact that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was born in a manger, died on the cross and rose from the dead, lives by His Spirit in every soul of every Christian believer. The decision comes in, because we have to step out in faith and believe that this statement is true. If we can do this, then we can become saved through Christ Jesus; therefore, becoming a new person in Christ.

So, we are a new person in Christ!!! What does that mean for us? In reality, it means a multitude of things; however, I want to highlight three of them. First, it means that we are never truly alone. In times of anger and frustration, we might isolate ourselves from those around us, even those that we love. Personally, I am guilty of this. When I get upset, I just want to be alone and not talk to anyone. You know, do the healthy thing and wallow in my own self-pity. I did this a lot when my father died. At 16, I did not have the emotional maturity to deal with my thoughts or feelings; however, as you get older, these skills and abilities develop.

No matter how hard we try to get away from the people around us, we can never get away from God…for good or bad. He is with us always…in times of happiness, in times of heartache, and in times of trial. Again, don’t take my word for it, take the bible’s word for it. We can find assurances of this in Psalms 27:1 (The Lord is my light and salvation, whom shall I fear), Romans 8:31 (If God is with me, who can be against me?), and 1 John 4:4 (Greater is he who is in me, than he who is in the world).

Being a new person in Christ also means that Christ knows directly all that you face and feel and fear. Christ knows exactly what we are going through all the time. He knows every trial and every temptation. He knows our every need before we ever pray it to Him. Does that mean that we should not pray to Him, absolutely not. However, it does mean if we don’t have the exact words to say, that God still hears us and can answer our prayers…all we have to do is cry out to Him.

Finally, being a new person in Christ, means that the Spirit of Christ is actively at work in your soul. Let’s stop and think about what all the Spirt of Christ does in the life of a believer. The Spirit gives us understanding of the Word. The Spirit convicts of sin. The Spirit makes us holy. The Spirit intercedes for us. The Spirit equips us with gifts for ministry. How wonderful!! As a new person in Christ, He gives so much to us…all we have to do in return is believe in Him and serve Him, and in my opinion, serving Him is the fun part. For me, that is singing and speaking. For you, that might mean being a missionary or working at a food bank or being a prayer warrior. No matter how big or how small, every job is vital to the kingdom of God.

**I Am Chosen**

 Now that we know that we are new people in Christ, we need to know why. The why, is our second I AM statement…I AM CHOSEN. We see this in John 15:16, which says, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.”

 Throughout the Bible, we can find countless examples of God choosing people that were not perfect.

* Abraham was old
* Elijah was suicidal
* Joseph was abused
* Job went bankrupt
* Moses had a speech problem
* Gideon was afraid
* Noah was a drunk
* Jeremiah was young
* Jonah ran from God
* Naomi was a widow
* Peter denied Christ 3 times
* Martha worried about EVERYTHING
* Zacchaeus was small and money hungry
* Paul persecuted Christians before becoming one

If God used these people, he can absolutely use you too…and he will. When you first make the decision to follow God, you probably don’t know what God has in store for you. To be honest, this can be a scary thing. A lot of people want to know where the road is going to lead them before they take it. That’s why we use apps like Google Maps or MapQuest, or even an old Garmin. However, when God chooses us, only he knows where the path will lead. In those scary moments of not knowing, we have to have faith in our Heavenly Father, be patient, and believe. If we can do these things, God will show use the way, for He chose us for something special, and something that we are uniquely equipped for.

**I AM FORGIVEN**

 Even though God chooses us for something special, it can hard for us to believe the He chooses us, because of our past, because of our present. I will be the first to tell you that I have made more mistakes that I really care to admit. I was very sheltered in my youth and teenage years, so when I first got freedom after high school, I went off the rails for a while. Despite being a Christian and going to church, I was doing things that I know that I should not have been doing.

 Thankfully, through all of these idiotic moments, God did not leave me…he did not condemn me to hell…he did not mock me…instead, he forgave me (though I certainly did not deserve it). There is a caveat to this forgiveness though…we have to ask for it. 1 John 1:9 puts it very plainly, as it says “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

 This is so easy and so hard at the same time. God’s forgiveness is easy, because all we have to do it ask for it. We don’t have to sacrifice a goat or a ram or a sheep (thank goodness…the smell would be atrocious). The difficult part about God’s forgiveness is that we have to humble ourselves and admit where our shortcomings lie. We have to admit that we are wrong. We have to admit that we are worthless sinners, in need of God’s forgiveness. That is HARD. We are prideful people. I don’t know a single person that likes admitting mistakes and likes being wrong, and if you say you do, I’m going to have to call your bluff on that one.

 I believe most people in this room to have made the vitally important decision to become saved; however, if you have not, the process to become saved is not a difficult one.

1. Hear the Gospel: Roman 10:17 tells us that “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” We cannot ask for forgiveness if we don’t understand how forgiveness works and where it comes from.
2. Believe in Jesus as God’s Son: John 8:24 tells us that “After one hears the Gospel, he must believe that Jesus is the Son of God.” We must believe that he is the one and only Son of God and that there is NO other way to get to the Father except through the Son. We cannot sacrifice enough things or be a good enough person, we must get to Heaven through Christ Jesus.
3. Repent of our Sins: Now comes the hard part, asking God to forgive us of our countless sins. This is also the part that we must constantly do, as no matter how hard we try, we will continue to sin, even after being saved the first time. You must whole-heartedly mean what you say when you are asking for this forgiveness. Acts 2:38 tells us to “Repent and be pardoned every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sin, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

From here, we should confess our faith in Christ, be baptized, and remain faithful. If we were honest and sincere about your salvation, you won’t be able to resist shouting it from the mountain tops. Being baptized is the outward sign of an inward event. Mark 16:16 tells us “He who believes and is baptized will be saved.” Remember, even Jesus was baptized. Finally, we must remain faithful. As I said, the Christian walk is far from easy, but we need to do our best to walk closely with the Lord. This is something that you have to pray on every day, not just one time or once a week. There is no right way or right place to pray. My favorite place to talk to God is on my way to work. I drive 40 minutes each way, so I have lots of time to conversate with God, and it is a great way to start my day.

**I AM A CONQUEROR**

 The final I AM statement that I want to discuss today is I AM A CONQUEROR. I’m going to be short and sweet and to the point with this one. By doing what we just talked about, and asking Jesus to come into your heart, you have already conquered a very big hurdle, eternity in Hell. God is infinitely more powerful than Satan…always has been and always will be…and because of this, we can be a conqueror over sin. Romans 8:37-38 tells us, “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.” What a reassuring thought! We don’t have to be destined for hell! We don’t have to give into temptation! We don’t have to struggle with addiction and anger! Jesus was a conqueror over death, and we can we conquerors over sin, through Him!! Hallelujah!!

 If you believe what we talked about today: you are a new person in Christ, you are chosen, you are forgiven, and you are a conqueror…let me hear you say Amen this morning!!