

Message on Thursday, September 25, 2025

“In his name the message about repentance and the forgiveness of sins must be preached to all nations.” Luke 24:47

Dear church,

Words can open a new world to us, inspire insights, expand our minds, penetrate our hearts... and even enter our bloodstream. At other times words may do the exact opposite: constrain our minds. We think what the word says but our certainty deprives us of getting to its deeper meaning. Words can become clichés and stereotypes that keep our minds imprisoned.

I was recently pondering the biblical term “metanoia,” the Greek word that is usually translated as “repentance,” as here in Luke 24. But repentance seriously constrains what the Greek word “metanoia” means, diminishing the power of its message. When I think of repentance, images of people in deep remorse come to mind. Someone might be kneeling in a pew or in front of a cross, promising to change their habits and behavior. “Repentance” carries a strong religious connotation. In that sense, it has its own value. Kneeling and re-thinking your choices in life is not bad. Still, the word “metanoia” is bigger, much bigger – and carries less baggage.

Here is what it means in the words of our new pal, “AI.” I don’t usually use AI in my morning messages but this explanation of “metanoia” is spot on and I couldn’t say it any better. So, here it is:

“Metanoia is a Greek word meaning ‘change of mind’, and it refers to a profound, fundamental transformation of one’s perspective or way of life, often associated with a spiritual or psychological shift. While in the Greek New Testament it is commonly translated as repentance or conversion, its deeper meaning involves a fundamental rethinking and reorganization of one’s thoughts, purpose, and understanding of the world. It goes beyond simple remorse or penance, signifying a radical turning point and a new orientation in life.”

Can you see the difference? There is a huge difference! Traditionally, most people think of “repentance” as that moment when we finally change what we always knew was wrong. “Repentance” has also been deeply associated with guilt. But the true meaning of the word goes beyond a moral awakening and a change of life style. You might be close to morally perfect (perfection is impossible!) and yet experience a beautiful transformation of your mind (metanoia) that shifts your entire thinking and way of looking at things – and the

way you do things. Ironically, the most moral people might especially need that kind of transformation, a changing of their minds because when you are super moral, you will be awfully close to self-righteousness. The New Testament is littered with folks who were religious, good and “fine people” but who didn’t “get” Jesus’ guilt-free and free-for-all message of a deep inner transformation of one’s life.

At a time when many people claim that the Christian religion wants to make you feel guilty, we can joyfully proclaim that guilt is not required for that transformative experience in your life which is associated with the gospel. It’s there for ALL to discover, a treasure hidden in our midst.

Metanoia: may your mind be transformed by God! The rest will follow...

Have a most blessed day,
Pastor Andreas Wagner