

2 CHRISTMAS JANUARY 2, 2011 CYCLE "A"

TITLE: NEW YEAR, NEW BEGINNINGS

READINGS: Jer. 31:7-14, Ps. 147:12-20, Eph. 1:3-14, John 1:(1-9) 10-18

Did you know that yesterday, New Year's Day, is the most universally observed holiday throughout the world? Many people make resolutions for the New Year. The only resolution I've ever made that I've also kept I made many years ago and that was not to make New Year's resolutions. Here are a few I like from Erma Bombeck:

1. I will go to no doctor whose office plants have died.
2. I'm going to follow my husband's suggestions to put a little excitement into my life by living within our budget.
3. I'm going to apply for a hardship's scholarship to weight watchers.
4. I will never loan my car to anyone I have given birth to.

According to Ed McManus, a comedy writer, you only have to keep your New Year's resolutions until February and then you can give them up for Lent.

It certainly is good for us to make changes in our lives as long as those changes will result in making us better people, better physically, mentally, spiritually. It is not a good thing if we concentrate on our past mistakes, on our regrets. But on the other hand we must concentrate on the building up of our lives for ourselves, for others and for God.

In our Gospel selection today John does just that. He puts the emphasis not on our past but on our future. Not on our regrets, but on our possibilities. Listen to what John says: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made...He was in the world and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God children born not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God." Jn.1:1-13.

There is our theme for the New Year! There is the focus for us. He directs us not on what we have been, or even what we are now. Rather he focuses us on what

we can be. “Yet to all who receive him, to those who believe in his name, he gave the right to become children of God...” Jn.1:12. And we are his children graced, forgiven, filled with his beneficent love, if we turn to him, acknowledge and accept him into our lives. Paul assures us in the same way in our second reading when he says, “He (God) destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.” Eph.1:5-6.

What a wonderful way to begin this New Year! By God’s Word we know and are assured of our status as true children of God. Isn’t that what we really want to know? Isn’t that the security and trust we want to feel? It is so important to know that we can live the next 365 days confidently aware that our life matters, to know that God is with us and that we can do all things through Christ Jesus who strengthens us? We need to assure ourselves each day that we are children of the Divine. We belong to God and have the ability given us by God to become like his Son Jesus if we live the life we have been given. And each one of us is capable of living that life. We are capable of living as the adopted children of God that we are!

A Japanese music teacher named Suzuki developed a method which has helped millions of young children all over the world learn to play the violin. Suzuki’s revelation for his method, which bears his name, came when he was visiting a building that served as a giant incubator for thousands of Japanese songbirds known as larks. The breeders of these larks take thousands of eggs and incubate them in giant, warm, silent halls that act as a gigantic nest. There is only one sound the tiny songbirds hear as they break through the shells of their eggs. It is the sound of another lark, a very special adult lark that is chosen because of its singing ability. Suzuki noticed to his amazement that every baby chick that hatched automatically began to copy the master singer lark. Even more remarkable, after a few days he observed that each chick, having started out by purely copying songs, began to develop its own variations on the original Master song. “Astounding!” thought Suzuki, “if a bird’s tiny, tiny brain can learn so perfectly then surely the human brain, with its vastly superior abilities, should be able to do the same and better!” Thus, the Suzuki method of learning to play the violin came to be.

So what of your enormous untapped spiritual potential? We have the greatest Master teacher ever to imitate. Copy the Lord Jesus! And we need to take note of the text from Paul I just quoted, it does not say that Christ came into the world so that you can improve your I.Q. or that you will be able to run the 440 or 880 in record

time. It says that whoever receives Christ and believes in his name becomes an adopted child of God. What does Paul mean? He is telling us that we can become like Christ Jesus. We, too, can be ambassadors of peace, of joy of hope of love of forgiveness that is greater than we can possibly imagine. We no longer have to live lives filled with inner conflict anger, resentment, fear, hatred, guilt or rejection. By the power of God's Holy Spirit we can become new people in this New year. That's something powerful to live up to, and each of us has the potential to do just that as adopted children of God. We can live like Christ, to become more than we are. We, too , can sing the song of our Master. Go forth into this New Year aware of who you are, to Whom you belong and what you can become. **Amen.**

Pastor Barney