

"New Day!"

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"Happy New Year" goes out to all of you this morning. Before this New Year was barely here, I started seeing advertisements from the gym: "Get fit in 2005." "Shed those holiday pounds." "No initiation fee, if you join in January."

Then there was this front-page story in one of the newspapers; complete with a picture of two bare feet standing on a bathroom scale. This article gave contact information for "Weight Watchers" and "Jenny Craig."

The fitness and diet industries know-- about the small window of good intentions that opens at New Year's. And we too have good intentions at the beginning of every New Year. Over 2/3 of us make a New Year's resolution, but only 12% keep them.

But THIS is going to be our YEAR for a New Year's Resolution! Just think; everyone gets a fresh start TODAY from nothing - zero - ZIP!! Forget about the past failed resolutions, and look ahead to a *New Day of your choice!* And that's what we are going to talk about this morning, New Day. The good news in today's message is this, If we start each New Day from scratch, then not only should we be able to keep our New Year resolutions, but live a meaningful life.

The question is, "How can we possible start each day from scratch?" Well, there is an exercise I found in a book entitled: "God is in the Small Stuff." The author suggests this-- at the end of the day (any old day will do), sit down with a blank piece of paper and write down everything you did that day. Everything. Every detail. And if we are fairly thorough (and honest), we will end up with a list of more than a hundred items.

It further suggests that we go back and rank each activity on our list according to the Scale you see on the screen:

Ranking Scale

1 – Essential

2 – Important but not essential

3 – Helpful but not necessary

4 – Trivial

After ranking each activity, we should begin to see two remarkable things.

First, we will notice how many details there are in one day. How did we do it all?

Second, we'll notice how much time we spend on unnecessary and trivial things, and how little time we spend on the essentials or important things.

So the interesting thing we discover about this exercise is that not only does it flush out our top priorities; it helps us to focus on the most important things in life.

And typically New Year's is when we begin to wonder if we are doing what's important in life. We ask questions about our life's purpose and meaning. Some of us try all sorts of things to fulfill our life's purpose, with possessions and wealth, or comfort and protection.

I remember back in the early 70's; Ed Roberts created the world's first commercially successful personal computer (PC). And he hired a 19-year-old named Bill Gates to write software for him.

Roberts ended up selling his computer business in 1977 and bought a farm. Seven years later, at the age of 41, he entered medical school. We all know today Bill Gates is the head of the largest software company in the world. But something new was created in Roberts. He began to fulfill his life long dream, and became a physician in a small Georgia town.

Now I suspect Roberts, like many of us, have wrestled with the questions about what's' most important in life. Roberts responds this way:

"The implication is that the PC is the most important thing I've ever done, and I don't think that's true. Every day I deal with things that are equally, if not more important here with my patients."

Roberts didn't ponder over the past. After selling that computer company, he bought the farm, entered medical school, and became a practicing physician.

Everyday Roberts put forth energy, which allowed for something new to be created.

And this is what our Bible passage is trying to get us to realize this morning as well. Here we find God saying much the same thing. First God says to us, "Forget the former things; and do not ponder over the past. We need to forget what happened last year, and put our energies into this New Year. Learn from the past, but do not live in the past.

And our Bible passage continues by saying: "God wants to create something new." In other words, God has a purpose for each of our lives. And we can't walk forward, looking backwards.

I remember when I was coming up on retirement, God created something new in my life, ministry. I had been in church all my life, but this was something totally new and different. Now every New Day I approach life from scratch, while doing ministry full-time.

And there is a quote that describes for me what is most important. It reads:

"I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work, the more I live. I rejoice in life, for its own sake.

Life is no "brief candle" to me. It is a sort of splendid torch, which I have got a hold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations." (George Bernard Shaw)

The funny thing about life is that each and every one of us was created for a purpose. Some of you may remember a 24-year-old young lady by the name of Kate Comiskey. Her life was horribly cut short; by a driver under the influence of drugs.

Within two short years, Kate found her life's purpose. By embracing life as a school teacher, she left a deep impression on hundreds of teenagers. They believed she genuinely cared about them. Several students echoed the same sentiment at her funeral service by stating this:

"She didn't just teach us English; she taught us about life."

There is no doubt in my mind that Kate approached life from scratch one day at a time! Maybe that's what you and I need to do with our New Year's Resolutions, "start each New Day from scratch?"

For I am convinced that God has planted seeds of faith in us. So we can be assured that God's mercy is new morning-by-morning. And when we come right down to each New Day, God want to create something new, and that gives life greater meaning.

Closing:

There is a writing done by Mother Teresa, that may help us better understand the real meaning of life. Let's read it together. I will read the words in white, and you follow along, reading the words in yellow.

Life is beauty, admire it.

Life is bliss, taste it.

Life is a dream, realize it.

Life is a challenge, meet it.

Life is a duty, complete it.

Life is a game, play it.

Life is a promise, fulfill it.

Life is sorrow, overcome it.

Life is a song, sing it.

Life is a struggle, accept it.

Life is a tragedy, confront it.

Life is an adventure, dare it.

Life is luck, make it.

Life is too precious, do not destroy it.

Life is life, fight for it.

As we leave here this morning, we have prepared this same writing on a Bookmarker. You each will receive one as you exit. Have a good Sunday; Happy New Year's again, now go in peace. Amen.