

Sunday, January 5, 2020

1 Corinthians 12:14-26

2 Peter 3:14-18

The New You Spiritually

Happy New Year 2020! May God bless continue to bless you and your loved ones. Around this time many people develop New Year's Resolutions and by even today's date these resolutions to live a better life in the new year are forgotten. Often these resolutions are to change or develop a daily practise but what we need to resolve is to change a pattern for living.

In the next five weeks our sermon series will focus on a key verse from 2 Corinthians 5:17 "Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone a new life has begun." With our focus on becoming a New You, we will explore what it means to be and become a new person in Jesus Christ with our understanding that as an individual we are made up of different parts not just physically, but spiritually, physically, emotionally, financially and relationally as well.

So getting back to New Year's Resolutions—what have you come up with? Usually we include the lose weight especially after eating many sweets and treats at Christmas gatherings but what else do we wish we could resolve to change about ourselves? If we reflect on the key verse for a moment, what is it that we are yearning for to truly live a new life in this new year of 2020? For many of us, we're frustrated, short on time, low on energy, stressed about work, or family, and maybe wondering about life itself and are seeking to be fulfilled. We aren't where we thought we would be in this moment and we are not sure where God wants us to be. Maybe we are not living the life that God created us to fully live. So how do we become a New You Spiritually?

The first step is to take responsibility for your spiritual health. As much as I would like to say I can see you growing spiritually- I cannot. Physically we all change in appearance each day/month/ year that goes by, but spiritually I cannot tell. When was the last time you had a spiritual health check-up? James 4:8 tells us "Come close to God and God will come close to you." But the first step is yours- take the step to come closer to God. Where are you in your spiritual health? Growing in faith, becoming more like Jesus? Developing good habits and experiencing God's peace? Or maybe- just a little bleh- stale, stuck and you are not sure where you are. Even David got stuck in his spiritual growth when he says (Psalm 26:2) Put me on trial, and cross examine me. Test me and know my heart" This is what we need to do- test ourselves

as to where we are in faith. And we will be talking about how we do this in the weeks to come. But for right now, we each need to take ownership of our spiritual health.

The second step is to pray to God and confess your sins. A barrier to becoming a new you and preventing you from living the life that God intended is sin. We are not perfect and what is it? It is anything that is present in your life that's less than God's best for you. This includes- choosing not to listen to God, rebelling and going your own way. But the good news is that if you have already believe in Jesus, you need only seek forgiveness. For as I John 1:9 states, "If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong." God forgives you, now you need to learn how to forgive yourself and let God lead your life- your whole being. Living a New You spiritually is not something you can do on your own—God is involved because God was there at the beginning and your beginning too.

A third step to a new you spiritually is to fully engage with your church. We need each other to work well as a system of parts together. In our reading from I Corinthians 12 Paul writes that our bodies have many parts and God has put each part just where they are needed. The same is for followers of Jesus Christ. You are a member of the body of Christ—a part of His church. If you want to become the new you, the person God intends you to be, you need to connect with other believers and mutually grow together. We each need to connect with God's family—and our church invites you to do this in different ways—sing with the choir, come and share in Bible Study (BBC), work on a committee of the church board, be a board member and share in the governance of the church or just volunteer to help in worship times, special gatherings, fundraisers. At any time you surround yourself with people who care about you, people of faith and good people overall, you will grow in faith. Watch for information about these opportunities in these next weeks.

The fourth step to the new you spiritually is to set goals for your spiritual life. We are a goal setting society- we set financial goals, education goals, weight loss goals and yet we do not set goals for our spiritual life. Even Paul knew that he could continue to grow in faith because he was still not all he should be. This kind of reminds us of the US Army's recruiting slogan which invites recruits to "Be all that you can be". What might your spiritual goals be for this year?

These goals might be to say to Jesus as savour in a public way and/or become a member of Glenwood church so that you will commit to your church family and surround yourself with caring loving people Maybe your goal is to get involved in our BBC group or maybe it is to read the Bible more. But in order to read the Bible you need to obtain a Bible. Or maybe

you need a plan for reading the Bible—there are some available in the narthex—the Our Daily Bread, or the 2020 Daily Bible Reading Guides from the Canadian Bible Society. Only you know what might develop as spiritual goals but remember that you are not alone as you seek to fulfil your spiritual goals. I am here to help you and walk with you and so is every other member of this church.

The fifth step in the new you- spiritually is to admit to your dependence upon God as you strive to get your spiritual life back on track. To truly become a New You spiritually is to know that you cannot do it alone. We belong to God and we all need Jesus. When Peter wrote to the early church communities he did so to encourage the newer believers to trust God fully. He encouraged them by writing, “Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and to the day of eternity.”

This also means to begin to speak openly about your Christian faith. We can no longer assume that everyone is Christian so tell others of your New You spiritual goals. This might scare away some people or it might involve talking to others about how Jesus Christ has made a difference in your life. This is also an important part of who you are even when you are near agnostic or “spiritual but not religious” individuals. Being authentic Christians and being seen as Christian is a spiritual goal for many today. What is it that you value about your life in God? From what are you hiding?

Our world has a way of getting us caught up in what really is trivial sometimes—work, school, eat, sleep and repeat. But what is most important in our lives needs to be checked again and again. Hopefully and prayerfully the New You spiritually will emerge because you have realized that you were being carried by the speed of the secular world to somewhere unknown. Yet when this is realized, you are not where you are supposed to be, where you want to be or even how you got there not to mention going back. We need God and God calls us to serve Him- to be his feet hands, eyes, ears and mouths for the world and its people. But you, need to be renewed in your faith in order to reach out to others. We need God to strengthen us for the tasks ahead—to fully realize who we are and how we are spiritually connected with God and each other. As we continue to grow together we will each understand ourselves anew and this is wonderful we are fearfully and wonderfully made by God to serve God and live fully engaged in faith. Let us rejoice in this as look beyond the stable and follow Christ Jesus our saviour and Lord.

PRAYER

God of grace we come before you today as we want to be like you- but us. We have confessed our sins and know of your forgiveness. So we leave those sins in the past and begin 2020 fresh and filled with hope. God enable us we pray to become like you and for us to be New in your eyes and understanding. We depend upon you and so we pray that you would give us the power, wisdom, strength and everything that we need to become the person that you intend for us so we can live a fuller more meaningful, faithful life. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.