

Beginning Again

Twenty-twenty promises to be a most exciting year! It is a year for our presidential election. The heathen soothsayers are predicting the end of the world. I look at it with a much more positive outlook. You might say, I am attempting to look at twenty-twenty with spiritual "2020 vision." The first of the year is a great time to reflect on the past year and anticipate the possibilities of the new year. The ending of the year has often been symbolized by the old year walking out in slow hunched movements portrayed as Father Time with a sickle and an hourglass with expired sand. The New Year is portrayed as a youthful cherub excitedly ushering in the new on the heels of Father Time.

New Year's is a good time for some resolutions, commitments and recommitments. Although some are critical of resolutions, I am not. I say, let us seize the opportunity to renew and restore our hearts and minds. I would like us to look at the opening words of the Bible and examine the most famous beginning and see what practical admonition we may receive.

1. EVERYTHING SHOULD BEGIN WITH GOD.

Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." How futile and vain to try to begin a new life or live a life without the Creator of life Himself! "In the beginning God...." This really says it all, doesn't it? Think about the nursery rhyme: "Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall, Humpty Dumpty had a great fall; all the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't put Humpty together again."

In our broken society, "all the king's horses and all the king's men" are working feverishly trying to put Humpty together and it's just not happening. Recently I heard an economics expert say that some of the attempts of politicians who say they are saving the country trillions of dollars are really giving us "smoke and mirrors." Here's how it is supposedly occurring: "Imagine Congress votes to spend one trillion dollars to cover the moon in cream cheese. Then three months later Congress convenes and votes to cancel the one trillion dollars expenditure to cover the moon with cream cheese. Then Congress announces to John Q. Public, we have saved you one trillion dollars." Congress did nothing of the sort, what they have done is voted not to spend the one trillion dollars that not only we never spent, but never had. They are doing something akin to rearranging the furniture on the deck of the Titanic. Our leadership reminds me of the rumor of Nero fiddling while Rome burned. As the late Dr. Vance Havner said, "Living in America anymore is like living in an insane asylum run by the inmates."

I am appalled at the overt rejection of God in the public arena. On the most conservative network in America an open forum discussion was taking place concerning the Bible being brought to a public school by a teacher and the litigation following this action. One of the so-called conservative guests said, "The only place a Bible has any business showing up in a public school in America is when it accidentally falls out of Johnny's back-pack," inferring, even then it should be quickly shoved back into hiding. With worldwide Islamic fascist terrorism, downturn of our economy and immoral activity on the rise, is this any

time to be demanding that prayer and Bible reading be kept from the public arena?

How does a country receive traction in a falling world? How does a marriage come back together after being torn apart? How does a prodigal find help after losing it all and ending up in a pigpen? The answer is found in Matthew 6:33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

2. WHEN GOD IS INVOLVED, NOTHING CAN BECOME SOMETHING.

Genesis 1:2 says, "And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." The evolutionists say that everything came from nothing. Nothing cannot produce anything other than what it is--nothing. It has been said, "Nothing is what rocks think about all day long." I know I am being absurd, but with good reason, for we believe that God can move upon nothing and make a universe and furthermore, that's exactly what He did.

As we enter this new year, there are some reading these words that may be lamenting that you virtually have nothing. Let this thought encourage you: when the earth was without form and void, that's when the Holy Spirit "moved" upon the face of the waters. The word "moved" is the same word for "brooding" which is likening the behavior of the Holy Spirit to a mother chicken who broods over her little chicks. God moved with compassion over the yet unformed earth, contemplating what it shall become. If you have lost everything, imagine this: God is brooding over you with thoughts and plans beyond your comprehension as He says in Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." Yogi Berra used to humorously say, "It's not over 'til it's over." I've got some news for you: when the Devil and all this world says it's over and all evidence confirms that it is so, God is hovering just above us with thoughts and plans that will not be thwarted by man's puny disabilities. In other words, it is not over even when it's over. Eight years ago my wife and I stopped by Eufaula, Oklahoma to visit Dr. Jerry McDonald, founder of Calvary Boys' Ranch. He was dying from a combination of Lou Gehrig's Disease and cancer. His tongue was paralyzed and he could no longer talk. He took a white writing tablet and wrote in a shaky handwriting, "Pray that it will be soon." He was referring to his home-going to Heaven. Ah, even in the Christian's darkest hour, God will take His hurting child home and give him a new body and one day a new Heaven and new Earth. For us, the end is just the beginning. Please never forget that for a Christian, the worst thing is never the last thing!

3. WHEN GOD SPEAKS THE LIGHT COMES ON.

Genesis 1:3: "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light." We often hear the phrase, "This shed light on the subject." God spoke and there was light. I pray the flock here at Christchurch will be illuminated this year in God's will, in God's way by God's Word. Even as God spoke and there was light, keep listening--He will speak light to your world!

In Exodus 10:22 and 23, "...Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days: They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings." God will keep the light on to His obedient people, although Egypt (the world) be eclipsed in smothering darkness. God is speaking; let us be listening as speaks light to us!

4. THE BEGINNING IS A GOOD TIME TO BEGIN.

Genesis 1:4 says, "And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness." God is willing in this new year to separate us from the darkness that we may have been in and place us in that "good light." He loves us and is willing to give us mercy, "...because he delighteth in mercy" (Micah 7:18).

In William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Act 3, Scene 4, Hamlet confronts Gertrude and implores her to repent. She replies, "O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain." Hamlet responds by saying, "O, throw away the worser part of it, and live the purer with the other half...Assume a virtue, if you have it not." A reminder that darkness and light need to be divided. Even if you feel like a loser because you have allowed that awful darkness that so pervades the world to come over you, you may, as Hamlet suggested, throw away the darkness and run to the light, cultivate the light and, as a believer, we say, let Jesus, Lord of the Light, flood you with His merciful light. He can undo the damage from the darkness. "Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones" (Proverbs 3:7 and 8). This will require the faith of a child. C. S. Lewis put it like this in *Mere Christianity*: "When you are not feeling particularly friendly but know you ought to be, the best thing you can do, very often, is to put on a friendly manner and behave as if you were a nicer person than you actually are. And in a few minutes, as we have all noticed, you will be really feeling friendlier than you were. Very often the only way to get a quality in reality is to start behaving as if you had it already. That is why children's games are so important. They are always pretending to be grown-ups—playing soldiers, playing shop. But all the time, they are hardening their muscles and sharpening their wits, so that the pretence of being grown-up helps them to grow up in earnest." We know that "...all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matthew 21:22). "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:24). And when it comes to prayer, our Lord teaches us that we are not "playing" when it comes to believing!

Let this be a time of beginning again. The Lord's mercy and grace have not run short. Believe and act on your belief! It's a new day, a new year—a new life!

-Pastor Pope-