

## **New Year – N.O.W.**

Ephesians 5:15-17

On Friday night (Watchnight), as the clock struck midnight, we said goodbye to the year 2004 and welcomed in the new year of 2005. It seems that every year we get excited about having a new start, a new beginning, a new opportunity, and a new resolve to make positive changes in our lives.

Most people have made what we have come to call New Years Resolutions. Those of us that always seem to be fighting the battle of the bulge, those extra pounds we seem to have put on, resolve to lose weight, eat less and exercise more. Others resolve to spend less and save more money. Many resolve to quit smoking or to quit drinking.

So here we are, at the first Sunday of 2005. I wonder how well we will do this year at keeping our resolutions. I wonder how many of us have already failed, but not to worry, there's always next year and we can try again!

The Bible tells us in the Book of Ephesians, Chapter 5, verses 15-17:

*15. See then that ye walk circumspectly,  
not as fools, but as wise,  
16. Redeeming the time, because the days  
are evil.  
17. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but  
understanding what the will of the Lord is.*

This morning, God has given to me and allowed me to give to you, a very special New Year's message. The late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once preached a world famous message entitled "I Have a Dream." This morning I want to share with you my dream and my vision for each of us individually and for all of us together as a church united.

Church, our time on this earth is very limited. The Bible tells us that life is like a vapor, here today and gone tomorrow, and for this reason we must be very careful how we live.

We are very busy people. We're always in a hurry. We walk fast, talk fast, and eat fast. And after we eat, too many times we stand up and say, "excuse me, I've gotta

run.”

Statistics say that the average life span these days for men is 75 years and for women it is 80 years. Frankly, we men chose it to be that way because we just got tired of listening to you women telling us what to do all the time, so we opted for the first flight on the Gloryland Express.

Now all you younger people that are snickering, I realize that 75 or 80 years sounds like a very long time, but you know what? I can remember when I thought that anyone over 40 years old was ancient, and one day soon, you'll wake up and find that you have also grown old and you'll wonder where all the time went.

Resolution number #1 for all of us as individuals should be to make the most of every opportunity. Jesus once went to the home of Mary and Martha and Lazarus. He sat down to teach them and as he taught, Mary was sitting at his just soaking in every word. Meanwhile, Martha was out in the kitchen preparing dinner.

Now it happened that Martha got very upset because Mary wasn't also in the

kitchen helping her. So she comes to Jesus and complains “Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!”

*“Martha, Martha,” Jesus answered, “You are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen that which is better and it will not be taken from her.”*

Now, was Martha committing a sin by fixing a meal in the kitchen? No, of course not! But here's the problem. She was so preoccupied with what she was doing that she didn't realize that God was in her living room.

This morning, don't get preoccupied with the things going on at home. Don't be sitting there wishing that Rev. won't be so long-winded today that the roast you have in the oven will burn before you get home – instead, concentrate on the message that God has for you today.

Martha made the same mistake that you and I likely make every day. We get so caught up in the here and now that we fail to deal with the eternal, the things that

will last forever and ever.

Today, we're overloaded with commitments. We've committed ourselves to go here and there, to take part in this activity and that social function. As a result, sometimes we meet ourselves coming out as we're going in!

We're also overloaded with possessions. Our closets are full and our garages are overflowing. We've gone into debt to pay for all these things that "we simply must have!"

Thirdly, we have an overload in the area of work! We get up early, fight traffic, and sometimes experience poor working conditions, and why? Because we have to if we're going to pay for all those possessions that we have accumulated!

Well, I could go on and on, but I am sure you get the picture. There are so many demands on our time, so many things that need to be done, that sometimes we don't find time to do the things that are really important, like praying for each other and our church.

Make the most of every opportunity church, but keep God as the center of your life, the most important part of your life. Don't get too busy to spend time with Him and in His work.

The second resolution we all need to make this year is this – Understand what the Lord's will is.

Now what do you think God's will is for you this New Year? Do you think He wants your mind so saturated with worries and anxieties that you can't think spiritual thoughts? Do you think He wants your social calendar to be so crowded that you don't have time for the important things? What do you think God's will is for you this year?

Let me make a couple of suggestions for you to consider. First of all, establish your priorities. I'm assuming that since you're in church this morning that you believe God should be a part of your life. But when you begin to establish priorities, you have to decide just where He stands in your life. So ask yourself, "Who or what is most important in my life?"

And I'm hoping that your answer will be,

"My relationship with God through Jesus Christ is the most important thing to me." If so, then put that at the top of your list of priorities and say "This will affect every decision I make, every appointment I schedule, every relationship I have with others, and my whole outlook on life."

"Therefore, when Sunday rolls around, neither rain nor shine, nor football kickoffs, nor meals to be cooked, nor company that is expected, will interfere with my being in church, because God comes first in my life. I will worship the Lord and nothing will interfere with that."

When you prepare your daily schedule, you need to schedule some definite time each day to both pray and to read God's word. Pray for yourself and for your family and for the people around you. Pray for our church. Pray for the missionaries spreading God's word abroad. You will be blessed as you grow in your faith and trust in the Lord.

You must also spend some time with your family. Every husband here ought to have a date night with his wife. I'm serious. You ought to have a date night with your wife,

a time when just the two of you can get away and don't let anything interfere. No beepers, no telephones, no interruptions – a time when you can just talk and share with each other. Maybe at a restaurant, maybe just at home, but wherever it is, spend some time together.

Those of you that have children, spend some time with them too. They're growing up ever so fast. These are precious moments, don't let them get away. Make sure that you spend some quality time with your children. Place your family high on your priority list. It seems just like yesterday to me that Chrysannae was a little baby running around the house. Oh what I would give to have just one more day like that. Enjoy your children.

Now most of us have to work and I think that Christians ought to be good workers. When someone hires a Christian they ought to know that they are getting someone who will give them an honest days work, and not cheat them. Because we're Christians we have a responsibility to the Lord to honor Him, even in the marketplace.

So first of all, establish your priorities, and

then learn how to live today. The two greatest enemies of time are regrets for things we did in the past, and anxiety about what will happen to us in the future. We need not live in the past or in the future, but live in the present.

For each of you individually, here is my wish for your New Years. May you have enough happiness to keep you sweet – enough trials to keep you strong – enough sorrow to keep you human – enough hope to keep you happy – enough failure to keep you humble – enough success to keep you eager – enough friends to give you comfort – enough wealth to meet your needs – enough enthusiasm to make you look forward to tomorrow – and enough determination to make each day better than the day before.

As a Church, many of us share the vision of a stronger and better congregation. I look forward to that day with great anticipation. I hope it happens this year. I cannot promise you that it will happen this year for that decision is in the hands of the Lord and it will happen according to His timing.

Let me share with you what my vision for our church is and also what it is not. Have you ever seen Robert Schuller's Crystal Cathedral on his "Hour of Prayer" TV show? Located in Garden Grove, California, this cathedral has more than 10,000 windows of tempered silver colored glass. In addition, two 90-foot tall doors open electronically behind the pulpit to allow the morning sunlight to enhance the worship services. The sanctuary seats 2890 people and 1000 singers and instrumentalists can perform in the 185-foot long chancel area.

At one time, televangelist Jim Bakker of the famous PTL Club was going to build the world's largest church building. The building was going to be big enough to seat 30,000 at the Heritage USA complex in Fort Mill, S.C. The cost was estimated at \$100 million! It was also to have a 5000 seat TV studio and about 200 conference rooms with parking underneath. But as we all know, that didn't happen.

Do you think that fancy buildings and windows and doors impress God? In my way of thinking I surely think not. Yes, I believe that God wants to see us build our church so we have a place big enough to

accommodate our needs. However, a Godly church is not about big buildings and big budgets unless that church has their priorities in proper order.

Too many churches today just want to make a name for themselves, and if any church is just interested in making a name for themselves then they need a wakeup call. God didn't put us here to make a name for ourselves, be it a church, a preacher, a ministry or whatever. God put us here to glorify Him!

I Corinthians 10:31 says "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do (including building a church), do it all for the glory of God. A church building may be a part of God's business, but His real business is people! Building people, building a people of faith! NUTURE! Discipleship will be an integral part of our ministry and mission this year as we build a people of faith.

As we seek to build this congregation we cannot forget to reach out to the community around us. Seek to get involve in their lives. It is hoped that with the establishment of our counseling center early in the year, we will be able to

address the emotional, psychological, and spiritual needs of those in community.

In the area of worship and spiritual enrichment, it is my prayer that we will become known a worshipping church. With advent of two worship events on a Sunday morning as of the second Sunday of February, we will have more opportunities for worship.

Let us all keep the vision and the desire to build our church, but let us always remember the reasons why we are building it, to honor and glorify God and to bring people to the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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THE PASTOR'S CORNER  
Sunday January 9, 2005



Let me welcome you to a first in the new publication of The Pastor's Corner. It is my wish that as we embark on this New Year in building up the kingdom of God that we will truly commit ourselves to the mandate of our Lord and Reclaim and Rebuild NOW.

Highlights From Last Sermon:

Resolution number #1 for all of us as individuals should be to **make the most of every opportunity.**

The second resolution we all need to make this year is this – **Understand what the Lord's will is.**

When you prepare your daily schedule, you need to **schedule some definite time each day to both pray and to read God's word.**

I am challenging EVERY member and adherence to start reading the Word of God in an intentional way. Start with the book of Genesis – 'the book of beginnings' for the month of January. Raise your questions and comment to any Elder, myself or just take your comments to Bible Studies



Let us all keep the vision and the desire to build our church, but let us always remember the reasons why we are building it, to honor and glorify God and to bring people to the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We can achieve GREAT things under God as we work TOGETHER.

Congrats to ALL New Members



I invite you to send your feedback and or questions and comments via e-mail:  
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Call 939-1900 (Office)  
988-0226 (Home)