

“Resolutions”

Matthew 14:22-33 • Psalm 123

First Presbyterian Church, Corpus Christi, TX

Rev. Charles S. Blackshear • January 7, 2018

Well Christmas has come and gone in what seems like a blur and now we find ourselves at the start of a new year with all of the hope and anticipation that comes with it. For some reason, with the start of a new year, many of us make New Years' resolutions. According to a recent survey, 45% of Americans make New Years' resolutions every year and another 17% make them occasionally. That means a majority of us make resolutions at least some of the time. We seem to like the idea of starting over with a clean slate. We think that with just a little more effort our lives will be radically changed forever.

Retailers take advantage of our desire for change. This time of year you'll find stores promoting exercise equipment and things to help you organize and store all your stuff. Of course many of the magazines we find near the checkout at the grocery store want to get in on the action, too. They promise to help you “organize your life” or “lose 20 pounds by Valentines Day.” I saw one magazine that promises to help you “Discover a Happier, Healthier You.” As if health and happiness is something that's “out there” just waiting for you to discover it.

The problem with New Years' resolutions is that we almost never keep them. In fact, you may have broken some of your resolutions this year already. In the same survey of New Years' resolutions, 24% of those surveyed said that they have *never* succeeded in keeping their resolutions. They fail every time. Only 8% said that they always succeed with their New Years' resolutions. What happens is that our old self catches up with us. Our old ways creep back in and before long the resolutions are out the window. Change is very hard for all of us because so much of what we do is habit. The only way to change, to break a habit, is to replace it with a different habit.

This morning I want to talk about a few resolutions you might have made, and some better options. So what are some of the

common resolutions people make? Some of you will resolve to *take* a vacation. Or maybe you'll *take* art or music lessons, or you'll *take up* a new hobby. In Luke 9:23 Jesus says, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and *take up* his cross daily and follow me.”

The top New Years' resolution, the one more people make every year than any other, is to get in shape or lose weight. Many of those people decide that running is a good way to achieve their goal. They resolve to run...on their treadmill every day. Or they plan to do one of the programs like Coach 2K, which is designed to get you from the couch to running a 2 kilometer race. Some people resolve to train to run a marathon.

The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, “train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.” I'm not saying you shouldn't get in shape. That's a great goal. This year, though, let's resolve, as Hebrews 12:1 puts it, to “run with perseverance the race marked out for us.” One of the ways the Christian life is described in the Bible is a race. The goal, the finish line, is to become like Jesus. And just like running a race, starting is important but you must also finish the race, which takes training and perseverance. As long as you are living and breathing in this life you have more of the race to run.

What exactly does training in godliness look like? What's the training regimen? It certainly includes reading the Bible – both reading for information and reading for transformation. When you read your Bible, you should ask yourself, “how does this apply to my life today?” Something else that will help is to study it with other believers, discuss it together, and pray together. God uses each of us to help others understand His Word. If you're not studying the Bible with others, you are not getting everything God intends for you AND you're

denying others the understanding God gives you.

There are other things we can do that will help us to grow in godliness. Prayer is important, both privately and with others. Worship is another way we grow our faith. You should come here expecting to meet with God! Having close relationships with each other is also a key part of our race. Our Wednesday night dinners are a great time to connect with others. And of course serving will help you become more like Jesus who said, "The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve."

That brings us to a third resolution people might make this time of year, to fix something. Maybe you're determined to fix that leaking faucet or fix the fence that blew down in the storm. Or maybe you're planning to fix a meal for a friend. Looking again at Hebrews 12:1, "let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, *fixing* our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith."

When Peter stepped out of the boat, he was able to walk on the water as long as he kept his eyes fixed on Jesus. But verse 30 tells us "when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, 'Lord, save me!'" When Peter was distracted he took his eyes off of Jesus and began to sink. When you and I keep our eyes on Jesus – every day – we don't have to worry about the storms howling around us. Those things you worry about become less important as Jesus becomes more important in your thoughts. And the way Jesus becomes more important is through His Word and His people.

This year, let's all make some New Years' resolutions. Let's resolve to take up our cross daily and follow Christ. Let's resolve to run with endurance, let's resolve to fix our eyes on Jesus, and let's resolve to do everything for the glory of God.

Amen.