

Greetings to all those who are on the faith journey,

SCRIPTURE:

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NLT) – Larger reading: 2 Corinthians 5:11-20

“This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!”

STORY:

January is named for the Roman god Janus. An ancient Roman coin, now in the British Museum, pictures the god as having two heads: one looks back toward yesterday, and the other looks forward to tomorrow.

REFLECTION:

The stillness of the night was pierced by various small explosions followed by a number of loud bursts. Sleep had been successfully interrupted. The New Year had arrived much like every other New Year with loud celebrations emitting from homes within the community and with sleep lost within the mix.

The next morning had arrived like most other mornings. Upon retrieving the morning paper there was a peaceful silence which engulfed the street on which I live. There wasn't anything different this morning than yesterday's morning. The same cool damp air greeted me. The leaves were still falling from the neighbor's tree. Cars were parked along the street. The lone early morning walker was out doing his normal walk through the neighborhood. Nothing unusual. Nothing different. Nothing unique. Except the date for this morning was magically changed into a new number for the year.

The slate had been wiped clean. The errors from the past could be forgotten. New possibilities lay ahead. Moving forward into the future, my future, would be up to me. I could continue to nurse the painful memories from the past filling my thoughts with regrets over bad decisions made and of all those things that could have been if only.

Or, I could accept the gift of grace that offers the “get-out-of-jail” card ... the grace which means that not only was the slate wiped clean, but it was washed down so that there wasn't even a hint of chalk dust in the corners of my life ... no indication that anything ever existed on the slate of my life.

Oh, the consequences of those decisions once made are still around. I couldn't escape them because they built the reality of my present existence, but in the stillness of day one of the New Year I was reminded that a new day has dawned ... I can start over ... I can “Change (my) reckless way of livin', cross over the bridge” and “leave (my) fickle past behind (me), cross over the bridge” and while Patti Page's song had to do with romance nevertheless I heard it that early morning of the first day of the New Year as a statement about my relationship with God ... the “romance” of the lover of my soul.

A new day had dawned, the future had arrived, God's purpose lay before me and it was simply waiting for my embrace. All the possibilities of heaven were spread, like a giant tablecloth filled with a celestial banquet of endless hope and marvelous, delicious morsels of acceptance and forgiveness. God was giving me another chance to get it right for the umpteenth time ... far beyond the 70 times 7 ... His patience is unbelievable and His love is endless. Maybe the author was correct when he asserted that the Second Coming was not to be found in the coming of the Messiah again into our world, but in the fulfillment of God's purpose in our lives as we move into the future that God has created for us ... as we realize our full potential ... as we become a more complete creation ... as our energy is joined with His energy to do "these things and greater still" ("The person who trusts me will not only do what I'm doing but even greater things, because I, on my way to the Father, am giving you the same work to do that I've been doing. You can count on it." John 14:12, The Message).

Move over old world, get out of my way painful memories, get behind me bad decisions ... the new tomorrow has arrived and I embrace it ... thanks be to God!

QUOTE:

*Another year is dawning,
Dear Father let it be,
In working or in waiting,
Another year with thee.*

*Another year of progress,
Another year of praise,
Another year of proving
Thy presence all the days.*

*Another year of mercies,
Of faithfulness and grace,
Another year of gladness,
The glory of thy face.*

*Another year of leaning
Upon thy loving breast,
Another year of trusting,
Of quiet, happy rest.*

*Another year of service,
Of witness for thy love,
Another year of training
For holier work above.*

*Another year is dawning,
Dear Father, let it be,
On earth, or else in heaven,
Another year for thee.*

~Frances R. Havergal

PRAYER:

With great anticipation I've entered into this new year. Come Holy Father, I give myself totally to you and my future is in your hands. All to you I freely surrender in the name of Jesus. Amen

And the faith journey continues, Pastor Jim

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Worship is either in the sanctuary at 10:30 or via Facebook (Manatee United Methodist Church) or tomorrow via YouTube.