

Crossroads Community Church

Sunday, January 4th, 2015

Happy New Year! 2015 may have greeted us with snow and frost nipping at our nose, but our warm hearts worshipped the Lord with Joy! Pastor Don shared announcements and blessed the service in prayer,? Dear Father God we thank You for taking us through another year, through every high and low you never left us and as we enter a new year we know you will guide, teach and protect us through every challenge, every trial is an opportunity for us to discover your love and power, help us trust and obey You, in Jesus name Amen.?

We have just celebrated another Christmas and another New Year has come, and every year as we look back we may wonder, ?Where have the years gone?? Our lives on earth are so short; the average life expectancy for us is 76 years, so how do we spend those years? Do we make them count or do we waste them on fleeting things? King Solomon the wisest man to ever live once wrote,? For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven; A time to be born and a time to die, A time to plant and a time to harvest, A time to kill and a time to heal, A time to tear down and a time to build up, A time to cry and a time to laugh, A time to grieve and a time to dance,? Ecclesiastes 3:2-4. So timing is important, God's perfect timing is perfect and we ought to learn to trust it, we should make our time on earth pleasing to God and beneficial to others just as Jesus Christ did and God exalted him, when we do we will share in his glory, (Hebrews 3:14-15). So then how should we live? The Apostle Paul gives us a sense of urgency to do what is good and pleasing to God especially as life gets harder and the devil tries to ensnare us into evil, (Ephesians 5:15-17). The Lord understands that resisting temptation can be challenging, but for our behaviour to change into good it must be challenged, put to the test and God will provide a way for us to resist and make our faith stronger, (1Corinthians 10:13).

This morning I want to challenge you to make 4 commitments in 2015. The first commitment is to forget our own failures so we can move ahead doing better. Just because something went wrong in the past doesn't define who God made us to be; in His image, the image of His son Jesus is what we ultimately will look like if we keep pressing forward trusting God's leading all the way. You can't grab a hold of your future self if you don't let go of your old self or as it's been said you can't write a new chapter in a book if you keep re-reading the old one, so let it go, (Philippians 3:13-14). Do we all need to be forgiven? Absolutely! A new year is a great time to be forgiven, Jesus died on the cross for all of us to be forgiven.

Second and third commitments are closely related, committing to give up on grudges and restoring broken relationships. God expects us to forgive each other because he has forgiven us, (Colossians 3:13, Matthew 6:14-15). Grudges are destructive and affect all relationships; marriages, families and churches have all been hurt by grudges, it is self-vindication and self-preservation, it is unforgiveness and the root of all bitterness, it is not of God. Jesus who is perfect did not have these attitudes, although had every right to be vindicated, he did not choose preservation rather he chose to surrender to the cross to purchase our pardon. When a person holds a grudge it is self-destructive, a virus infecting the whole person; bitterness, unforgiveness and grudges are like drinking a poison and expecting the person we are angry with to die! Now is a great time to ask ourselves if we need to forgive and restore a relationship, it can be challenging but God invites us to do a virus check much like our computers do, mine asks for a virus check daily, God is the best virus protection and we ought to let him check us for viruses daily. God wants us to live at peace with one another and that requires love, patience, humility and forgiveness,(Romans 12:18). The challenge of restoring relationships can be met with God's help if we choose to take it. The more we rely on God, it will be easier to forgive and in turn ask for forgiveness when we are in the wrong.

Our 4th Commitment is to turn away from our sins and turn completely to God. Sins don't always have to be the big ones like murder, stealing or lying, it can be those pesky bad habits that we have become so accustomed to that we don't even realize the harm they cause to others and ourselves. We may even rationalize them by saying ?I can't help it; it's just the way I am.? I don't need to name them, I am sure our thoughts automatically went to whatever that sin is. God clearly tells us to turn away from every sin however challenging it may be we need His help and forgiveness so that sin doesn't have control of us,(Romans 6:12-13).

Beloved to be free from sin in 2015 all we need to do is ask for God's forgiveness, receive Jesus in our hearts, rely on His Holy Spirit's power to resist sin, simple but easier said than done, we need to choose to follow and obey God every day, and trust that He knows the plans He has for us, They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give us a future and a hope, have a Blessed New year in the Lord, Asherey Shalom!

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