

“A Change for 2016”

12-27-15

This first Sunday after the celebration of Christmas is a great one to answer the question, “Jesus has come, now what?” Our second lesson encourages us to know and live out the change that’s been brought about by Jesus Christ being with us. It’s also a great reminder that because of the coming of Jesus at Christmas, we’re made new.

That’s why our second lesson, from Colossians 3, fits perfectly with this time of the year. Open to Colossians 3. In a few days, we’ll be bringing in the New Year, and people will be making New Year’s resolutions. What are yours going to be? This is a time of the year when many people try to reinvent themselves.

Many people make resolutions relating to their health, jobs or hobbies. What kind of person do you want to be in 2016? Today, we have a list of seven New Year’s resolutions – seven things you can strive to be in the New Year, as people of God.

Look at verse 12, “*Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.*” These are five attitudes you don’t want to leave home without ever!

Compassionate hearts. The opposite of this would be someone who’s cold and heartless, someone who’s concerned only with themselves. Think of the character Scrooge from “A Christmas Carol”. He was a man who, was too busy balancing his own checkbook to notice the needs of other people. Someone with a compassionate heart is someone who’s concerned for others around them.

In this congregation, we have many people who make it a daily habit of praying for others. They look at the list in the bulletin or listen to people’s hearts and then spend time turning those people and their concerns over to God asking for His Will to be done to heal or take care of them. Today, the snacks after service are a gift to say thank you and celebrate all those people.

We need to ask, “What’s going on with the people at church? What’s going on with my family? What’s going on with the people at work? My neighbors? My friends? Is everything OK? What can I do to help you?” *“Put on then, compassionate hearts.”*

Kindness. Kindness includes not only saying nice things, but doing nice things. Kindness is going above and beyond the call of duty to help someone out. It was like just before Christmas at the grocery store when a woman dropped a carton of milk on the floor and it broke open. Almost immediately I heard over the loud speaker, “*Clean up in dairy.*” Someone quickly came to clean it up and said, “*Don’t worry about this, ma’am. I’ll take care of it.*” The woman continued to do last-minute shopping. “*Put on then, kindness.*”

Humility. Humility means that you recognize your own weaknesses. You don’t think about how great you are. I’m sure we all know somebody who the only person they talk about is themselves and how successful they are! Even though they might not realize it, the focus of their words is, “Glory be to me!”

Do you know who’s described in the Bible as the most humble man on the face of the earth? Moses! Listen to Numbers 12:3, “*Now the man Moses was very meek, more*

than all people who were on the face of the earth.” I’m sure he recognized his weaknesses very quickly, as God called him to lead 2 million people through the desert. But God told him He would be with him all the way, no matter what. *“Put on then, humility”.*

Gentleness. Gentleness is the opposite of the man who’s ranting and raving at the customer service counter in the store. Do you remember what it was like to ever hold a very expensive or precious item and how paranoid you were you’d drop it, and how gently and carefully you placed it someplace securely? That’s how God wants us to treat the people around us. *“Put on then, gentleness”.*

Patience. Patience means, *“the capacity to accept or tolerate delay, trouble, or suffering without getting angry or upset.”* It’s when the fast-food clerk doesn’t have a clue how to get your order right! It’s when it’s the bank teller’s first day on the job. You need to be patient with the people around you, even in trying circumstances.

These first five New Year’s resolutions are very, very important. Instead of being mean and aggressive, you need to want to be compassionate, kind, humble, gentle, and patient as you deal with people in a new way, a way that pleases God and witnesses your faith in Jesus Christ in 2016!

But there’s one more in verse 13, *“bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.”* In 2016, you need to **bear with one another and forgive others** no matter what kind of complaint you might have against them.

Jesus, your Lord, could have many complaints against you. All the things Jesus wants you to do, and you don’t do them. All the things Jesus doesn’t want you to do, and you do them anyway. But Jesus forgives you. He wipes all that sin out of your account. And Jesus holds no grudges. Jesus doesn’t say to you, “I forgive you for what you said to your friend the other day, but I’ll remember what you did.” No, Jesus forgives you, and forgets! It’s as though it’s never happened. That’s how Jesus forgives you. Forgive, as Jesus Christ forgave you!

And finally, verse 14: *“And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.”* After you have put all the other things on, then, over all them put on love! Even though the world didn’t seem to love God, God loves the world, and sent His Son on Christmas. Even though you didn’t ask for it and don’t deserve it, Jesus loves you and died for your sins on the cross. That’s the kind of love God’s talking about here. It’s a love which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

So how are you going to get the strength to carry out these seven New Year’s resolutions? Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you. Let Jesus change you! Spend time learning about His humility at the stable. Spend time learning about His compassion at the cross. Spend time learning about how He’s taken all your sin away, and how far He was willing to go, to save you.

Spend time with Jesus Christ in 2016!