David Pickering 12/1/18

New Year New Start

TEXT FOR ALL-AGE - From Matthew 3:1-6, 11-12

New Year, 2018.

It’s a moment when a lot of people make resolutions. They’re often about health and fitness, or work/life balance. According research for the private health company BUPA, two thirds of New Year’s resolutions don’t make it to February. According to another survey, the average British New Year resolution lasts even less time – guess how long? 7 days. Made Jan 1, gone by Jan 8.

Some people tweet their new year’s resolutions these days: things like “My New Year’s resolution is that doughnuts are good for me,” or “My New Year’s resolution is to spend less time talking to people and more time with my phone. Doing pretty well so far,” or even, “My New Year’s resolution is to be less perfect.” Sometimes they fade with time, like the man who started by resolving to work out every day, and ended up by resolving to drive past a gym at least once a week. Joey Adams said, “May all your troubles last as long as your New Year’s resolutions.”

We’re not talking about New Year Resolutions here today, but there is a sense in which it’s a good moment for a new beginning, so we’re calling our theme today New Year, New Start.

Why do we need a new start? And, if we’re Christians, do we still need a new start – we’ve made the big new start by following Jesus. Isn’t that it? Do we need any more new starts?

Well, look at it this way: even if we’re Christians, we’re still living in a contradiction, between the two sides to being human.

First, Being a human being is a wonderful thing. God makes human beings, and he makes us well. We can be proud of our common humanity, because God made us. He has made each of us very precious, very special, with all sorts of gifts and abilities. That’s true of you, and that’s true of me.

Second, Being this particular human being, I have many shortcomings and plenty of sinfulness. Just for starters, show me a well-made pork pie and I’ll show you things about human greed that you’ve never imagined. It’ll vanish faster than a magic show could make it.

I am trying, sometimes very trying, and there is a long way to go, I know.

When I look in the mirror I’d like to see a shiny saint with a dazzling halo you could warm your hands on

PING IMAGINARY HALO, but that, alas, is not the truth of the matter

– or not yet. Because, remember,

GHF-WMY: God hasn’t finished with me yet.

ALL SAY IT OUT LOUD

And God hasn’t finished with you yet. If you’re ever feeling a bit down about your Christian life, just remind yourself:

GHF-WMY: God hasn’t finished with me yet.

ALL SAY IT OUT LOUD AGAIN

We live in the contradiction between being God’s very good creations and being sinful people. That’s why we keep on trying but we keep on sinning too.

And that’s why we confess our sins to God when we meet up. It’s not just to fill in the time, or give us something to do. It’s important. It goes back to the beginning. Did you notice that the people who John the Baptist baptised confessed their sins first? Then Jesus sends the Holy Spirit, as John said he would.

We need to say sorry to God each day ourselves, as well, but even if we forget at home, saying sorry at Church reminds us of who we are and where we stand with God: as sinful people always in need of his forgiveness. Confessing our sins is not an optional extra in the Christian life.

That’s why we just confessed our sins and why we keep doing so on Sundays, and why in the Christian life we keep falling down, and then we dust ourselves off and say sorry to God and get back up again walking with Jesus with the help of the Holy Spirit.

New Year is a good moment to renew our commitment to the Lord. We can affirm our faith by using the renewal of baptismal vows that the CofE has written; renewing our baptismal vows at New Year is a kind of Christian version of New Year’s resolutions. There are five affirmations, and if you are happy to make each commitment, then at the end of each of the five, join me in saying, “With the help of God, I will.” Got that? “With the help of God, I will.”

Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, [ALL-AGE: Bible’s teaching and friendship]

in the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers?

**All: With the help of God, I will.**

Will you persevere in resisting evil and,

whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

**All: With the help of God, I will.**

Will you proclaim by word and example

the good news of God in Christ?

**All: With the help of God, I will.**

Will you seek and serve Christ in all people,

loving your neighbour as yourself?

**All: With the help of God, I will.**

Will you acknowledge Christ's authority over human society,

by prayer for the world and its leaders,

by defending the weak, and by seeking peace and justice?

**All: With the help of God, I will.**

**Let's pray - asking God for strength and grace to keep these resolutions.**

On Sun, Jan 14, 2018 at 5:35 PM, Anne Curtis <annecurtiskb@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi Gary. David

Very good service this morning, all went over very well. Maybe tell us what you’re going to do with prayers as I wasn’t expecting them to be read out. A good introduction to open prayer though, we could certainly do that activity again I think.

Could I have the renewal of vows text please David, and the poem or whatever you quoted Gary, I can put those on the website?

If either of you have the text of what you said, do send that along as well. I recorded Gary but forgot to record David, very sorry.