



Raquette Lake Chapel

Raquette Lake, New York USA
www.raquettelakechapel.org

1Q2023 Pastoral Letter

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS! (IN CASE YOU FORGOT)

Friends of Raquette Lake Chapel,

Like it or not, it's that time of year again. Parties held, noisemakers exercised, funny hats worn and lost, and now family, friends, and work colleagues are starting to ask, "What's your New Year's resolution?"



Some of us ignore this tradition altogether. Some of us thoughtfully construct our resolutions; and some of us half-heartedly make up resolutions on the fly when asked about them. Whichever path we take, we do know this: after three months into a new year, only about 10% of our resolutions are still standing. Not a good track record.

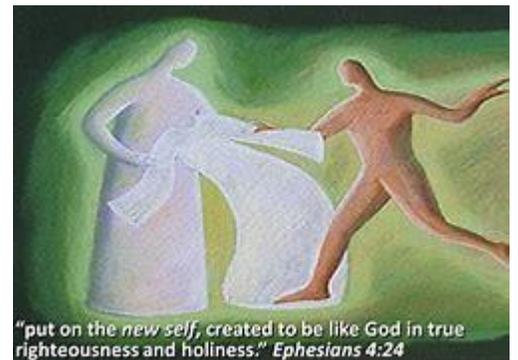
This leaves us asking ... "Are New Year's Resolutions good for us?" and "So, if we consistently are horrible about keeping our resolutions, why bother?"

If good for us, is there a Biblical basis for New Year's Resolutions? Unfortunately, the Bible has nothing to say about this topic, but does, of course, give us wise guidelines for human behavior in relationship to God and to each other ("what are the two greatest commandments" - Matthew 22:34-40). Our question becomes ...

What would God want us to do? Let's see if Scripture imparts some wisdom on resolutions:

Proverbs 16:9 -- "*The heart of a person plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.*" Proverbs reminds us that as we grow and discover our talents and gifts, it is only God who knows what will be best for us. Therefore, as we seek our futures...and make our resolutions... we recognize that as we rely on God and we will prayerfully ask God to show us the way.

From Ephesians 4 -- "*For surely you have heard about him and were taught in him, as truth is in Jesus, to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*" There is a natural urge to "put on a new self" whenever crossing an important threshold, a new job, a marriage, a family move, a new year. That's the presence of the Holy Spirit!



The *new* year is a way of reminding ourselves that we are made *new* in Christ. As believers in Christ Jesus, God has given us a new and better life. We can step into the year 2023, putting aside our past – our forgiven past – and resolving to walk in the way that God has created for us: a life of goodness, righteousness, peace, and patience.

In closing, a folk tale.

A poor peasant woman began to feel her spiritual life dwindling and went into the jungle to find spiritual help. After several days without success, she encountered a remote village where its inhabitants directed her to a nearby cave where they claimed the most learned guru in the land lived.



The peasant woman found the cave after hours of hard travel through the thick jungle and stopped at the entrance. “Come in, my child,” a voice called from inside the cave. The peasant woman cautiously passed through the cave entrance into darkness. A few moments later, as her eyes adjusted to the dark, she could see a small candle burning at the rear of the cave. In front of it sat an elegantly dressed woman.

“Are you the wise one I was sent to?” the peasant woman asked.

“That depends on why you are here,” the wise one answered.

“I came because I am worried that I have been failing in my religion. I try to observe the required rituals daily, and on special occasions. I try to follow the divine rules our people have been taught. But I admit, I am not always successful. I fail at keeping rules from time to time. I think I am too selfish and don’t pay enough attention to my family and my neighbors. And worst of all, I often find my mind wandering during worship and ceremonies. I fear I will lose sight of God!”

The wise one responded, “Do you feel you have tried to live a good life?”

“Yes, yes, of course!” the peasant woman replied.

“Then believe this: you will never lose sight of God if you keep trying your best to live a good life. And, even if you are not always successful and fail sometimes, you are so much better for having tried, and those around are better too.”

Celtic Blessing of the New Year (Carmina Gadelica)

God, bless to me the new day,
Never bewtoewed to me before;
It is to bless your own presence
You have given me this time, O God.

Bless to me my eye,
May my eye bless all it sees;
I will bless my neighbor,
May my neighbor bless me.

God, give me a clean heart,
Let me not from sight of your eye;
Bless to me my family,
And bless to me my means and my home.

God’s Peace,
Pastor Vance Mortensen
vance.mortensen@gmail.com

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