

Pastor's Message

It seems like each year I go through a sort of ritual. I make certain plans - personal and for the church. Things that I would like to improve. Things I would hope that God would bless. All sorts of efforts of mine which fail miserably before the end of January is even close.

So, this year I have a different strategy. I am making no plans. I am not going to try and improve a thing. It seems better that way. At least I won't feel guilty for when I fail so badly.

Have you ever wondered if God had something else in mind besides the try - fail, try - fail again, try - fail again & again cycle that so many of us have gone through? I'm not sure God has in mind my suggested strategy of not trying and not working on improving anything. And I'm equally convinced that God doesn't want me (or you) wallowing in guilt because we've failed for the umpteenth time.

So what could possibly be God's preferred way to approach this new year. After all, in so many ways, we are getting a fresh start when we enter a new year.

One Scripture that I've heard over and over again and I've used myself over and over again is the one from Jeremiah 29: 11 "***I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for wholeness and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.***"

This Scripture is a popular one and it especially seems to be applied at this time of the year - you know, New Year's resolutions and all.

There are a couple things to note about this verse. One is that it is God speaking and He states that He knows the plans He has in mind for you. So, it sounds like it is God's plans and not yours or my plans. So I guess my approach of asking God to bless my plans is not going to work. But I already

knew that. So, I'm going to have to find out what God's plan is. That could be a lot of work. Besides, what if I don't like God's plans?

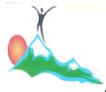
The second thing I notice about this verse is a question. Who is the "you" that is being referred to? If I look back a few verses I can see that God had instructed Jeremiah to write this letter to those who were in exile in Babylon: the elders, priests, prophets, and all the people who had been taken into exile by King Nebuchadnezzar from Jerusalem to Babylon. (29:1)

So, can you and I be considered part of who God is speaking to in this verse which speaks of God having a plan for? The Church has historically understood that Scripture quite often has more than one audience. The first audience is the one who it is originally written to. And the second audience is you and I who are reading it now. And to the original audience there is spoken vs. 10 "***When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place.***"

Now, you and I are not quite bound by the same thing. Seventy years are not necessarily the time frame that God has in mind for us. But we can be well assured that God does have a time frame for us. We just can't be certain that it is 70 years or some other number of years. That was a unique time frame for the original audience and not us, the secondary audience.

We can, however, be confident that God will visit us. But we are also called to believe God. We must place our faith in God. Otherwise we haven't got the capacity to know if or when He does visit us.

We can also be confident that God will complete His promise(s) to us. But, once again, we must be people of faith. We can't be an atheist and expect any of this to take place for us. There is always a



call to believe and to place our faith in God. And, particularly we are called to place our faith in Jesus Christ.

Well now, that was an interesting journey. And I certainly haven't unpacked it thoroughly. But I think I've unpacked enough for now. First I felt like a failure at my attempts to bring about change in the upcoming year. Then I came to see that it is by faith I am to trust God and his plan for me. And His plan really will only unfold as I trust Him and allow Him to work His will in my life.

Now I've got a plan. My plan is to let God make the plan. My plan is to just seek God's face. My plan is to ask God lots of questions. My plan is to listen closely for His answers. My plan is to let Him have the lead and try not to take it back as the year goes on. Maybe we could go into this next year of 2018 together. Maybe we could plan to pray for each other and that our priorities and desires would stay focused on Christ and our personal relationship with Him. That is my plan for 2018. What is yours?

Your friend

Pastor Vern

A ship is always safe at shore, but that is not what it's built for. Albert Einstein



Calendar of Events

Each Tues. @ 7 am – Prayer in Pastor Vern's office

Each Wed. @ 6:30 pm –Prayer @ Parish House

1st & 3rd Wed. of month - M&M's-has been canceled until further notice

2nd & 4th Sat. of month 13th & 27th - Men's group meets @ 8 am. 13th @ PH, 27th @ Lynn's Diner

No Admin. Bd. meeting or Spiritual Bd. mtng in Jan.

Each Sunday 9:30 SS
11 am Worship
Jan 7th Communion Service

Sat. Jan 27th beginning @ 10 am is the DeRuyter Community's Winter Whiteout. The PH house will be opened for coffee, desserts, etc.

The old healer to the soul:

It's not your back that hurts, but the burden.

It's not your eyes that hurt, but injustice.

It's not your head that hurts, it's your thoughts.

Not the throat, but what you don't express or say with anger.

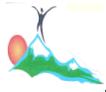
Not the stomach hurts, but what the soul does not digest.

It's not the liver that hurts, it's the anger.

It's not your heart that hurts, but love.

And it is love itself that contains the most powerful medicine.

(UnknownAuthor)



Birthdays & Anniversaries

Jan 2~~Ed Sautter
Jan 8~~ Carl Wightman
Jan 10~~Kyle Paladino
Jan 10~~Lois Damon
Jan 11~~Tim Etter
Jan 12~~Marleah Marshall
Jan 13~~Shanley Nicholas
Jan 15~~Barbara Lidell
Jan 15~~ Michael Furlough
Jan 16~~Elliott Millet
Jan 16~~Ted Bolton
Jan 21~~Isabella Travis
Jan 21~~Brooke Wood
Jan 21~~Scott Chiesa
Jan 22~~Bruce Zeigler
Jan 22~~John Mauzy
*Jan 23~Bruce & Bonnie Zeigler
*Jan 24~~Ed & Kristine Sautter
Jan 25~~Melvin Coon
Jan 26~~Rosalie Laris
Jan 27~~Naomi MeKeel
Jan 28~~Lisa Springer Travis
Jan 28~~Foster Cameron Wood
Jan 29~~Rick Chiesa

Reading Corner



Make sure you pick up the book Left to Tell by Immaculee Ilibagiza. It is about how a young woman discovered God in the small confines of a bathroom with seven other ladies for 91 days. She became more than a conqueror during this time of the Rwandan Holocaust, she is an example of Romans 8:28.

Special Offering

Would you like to take part in the special offering for a new projector and screen? If you would like to donate so the right side of the church can view the announcements and the

songs better, please consider a donation. Plans are in motion to add another viewing screen to the right side of the pulpit and you can be a part of the new addition with your donation.