

“A New Adventure”

January 2010

Hymn “Onward Christian Soldiers”

Scripture So from now on we don't look at anyone the way the world does. At one time we looked at Christ in that way. But we don't any more.

Anyone who believes in Christ is a new creation. The old is gone! The new has come! It is all from God. He brought us back to himself through Christ's death on the cross. And he has given us the task of bringing others back to him through Christ.

God was bringing the world back to himself through Christ. He did not hold people's sins against them. God has trusted us with the message that people may be brought back to him. So we are Christ's official messengers. It is as if God were making his appeal through us. Here is what Christ wants us to beg you to do. Come back to God!

(2 Corinthians 5:16-20 New International Reader's Version)

Prayer Let us pray – O God, our strength and our guide, we call on you as we enter this New Year. Our hearts are gladdened in your presence. Help us to discover truth and speak it; to feel your glory and to show it; to hear your direction and to follow it, in Jesus name. Amen.

Lesson There is a grand feeling inside us when we sing “Onward Christian Soldiers”. Despite valid objections to its warlike imagery, it remains one of the most popular of all hymns. For many it evokes feelings of the adventurous faith we knew as young people, when all our lives lay ahead of us. The strong words and rousing melody still stir us.

When Jesus says, “Follow me,” and we do so we embark on life's most challenging and demanding venture. What if we respond, “Well yes, but first we must settle the issues of Sunday shopping, our position on native land claims, and how we feel about marriage of homosexual persons.” But the countless issues the church deals with will appear on the agenda in due course. Nothing ends with those first few following steps, but everything begins with them.

Adventure begins with the realization that Jesus is going somewhere. He is on the move. Jesus is more interested in the future than in the past. It is not where we have been that counts but where we are going.

It isn't always easy to accept change. New friends join our circle of relationships; things suddenly aren't the same, and we feel out of balance. We move and the stores and street signs are strange, and we feel uncomfortable. Our financial situation or health alters and we're worried and concerned. We have to learn to do things differently, and we don't like it.

In the Bible, God reveals to us that he is a God of new things, of change and movements. He longs to bring us into a new way of life – a new way of thinking about people and places, a new way of accepting the changes he sets before us.

When we refuse to accept change, we refuse to grow. We miss out on wonderful opportunities. We may even miss out on relationships that could bless us in ways we can't imagine. Even a change that brings limitations can be a chance to be still, to listen to God, to allow others to bless us in new ways.

For some, when they follow Jesus, in some parts of the world it may mean being ostracized, or tortured, or even killed. For others, following Jesus costs far less, but it could mean refusing a bribe that competitors are willing to take, thereby losing a profitable tender. It can mean so minor a matter as taking time to visit a lonely person confined to home. We are not expected to know what may be asked of us before we begin the journey; nor where it will take us. We are expected to understand only that we follow one who will lead us into adventurous living.

Discussion Are you ready for new adventure in your life and in the life of your men's group as we begin this new year?

Prayer Let us pray – Our God, too often we follow at a distance or not at all. When we falter and are uncertain, speak to us with commanding love and help us to become what we were meant to be. Lead our steps into the way of service that lives lived in the shadow of doubt or pain or need may find new hope. We bring our prayers for a world in need and pray that some who follow in the footsteps of Jesus may be led to positions of power and influence, to bring to those offices the strength of your Spirit. In Jesus' name. Amen.

This meditation is based on material from "A time to gather" by Robert A. Wallace and "Devotions from the Heart" by Pamela Kennedy