

## Clean Out the Old and Start Anew

Devotion for January 2016

Hymn: VU 562 Jesus Calls us

Scripture: Isaiah 43:18-19      2 Corinthians 5:17 & Ephesians 4: 22-24

Reflection:

In our culture January is a time to clean out the old and start anew. For some that means stuff, and for others that means turfing our old habits, old ways of thinking, resolving to kick the smoking and other various injurious habits. We are usually pretty good at this renewal stuff, at least for a few weeks and even longer, but slowly most of us usually drift back and be and act like we always have. Since there was no Christmas and no New Years as we know it, in the bible I wondered what it had to say about renewal: quite a lot as it turns out.

Discussion:

Should New Years have any special meeting for us? Why wait till Jan 1 to make changes in our lives, or is it just a human response that we pick on New Year's rather than say, our birthday or just any time we feel we need to smarten up and change?

Hymn VU 568 Dear Lord Lead me.....

Prayer:

Jesus, New Years, August or November we rely on your faith in us and your to grace to enable us to change, to live the lives we should. We thank you.

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## Is February Holding the Short Stick?

Devotion for February 2016

Hymn: VU 530 All Beautiful March of DAYS

Scripture: Rev: 1:8

### Reflection:

Ever wonder why February got short changed. I mean they could have given November short shrift or August for instance! Or why not make a couple more months thirty days and tack those two onto February to make it thirty instead of just twenty eight. Even as a kid it never seemed fair to me. People will tell you some scientific reason, like the orbit around the sun, but that is nor the case. It was a couple Roman characters that were responsible. The real scientific reasons for the 365 day year came much later, but still left February holding the short stick. So, days, months and calendars were actually important tools in both Old and New Testament. Other faiths and beliefs have a different calendar than we, as you know. A lot of research has been done to relate historical events and God's dictate in various parts of the bible from Genesis right up to revelations with dates. If one is interested it is a fascinating study.

### Discussion

Do you think the seven days in genesis were real and how about the duration of the flood, and of course the most important three days in the new testament? One needs some modern facts from qualified historians but the questions make for a great discussion. According to some experts there is ample proof of the flood and why not, after all our faith is based on the events of three days.

Hymn VU 412 This the day.....

### Prayer

Lord we thank you for each and every day. As days roll into weeks, then months and then years we realize how precious each day, each hour is. For the earth, the sun the Stars we thank you God and give you praise each day as we rise. Amen

## **“March Weather - Unpredictable”**

Devotion for March 2016

Hymn: VU 625 I feel the Winds of God

Scripture:

Reflection:

At a certain age we are all familiar with, “March comes in like a Lion and goes out like a Lamb”. Do you suppose whoever coined that phrase was thinking of Jesus? After all he was a bit feisty like a stormy March day, chastising his own Jewish brethren for their actions, and even using a whip to drive them out of the temple. However at the end he was meek, mild like a lamb, surrendering without a fight and giving in to his captors: no blustering winds or blowing snow, just submission. One wonders what that says about how we enter and exit life. Do we go through life like March weather: changing, unpredictable, stormy, until one day, finally giving in and surrendering to the will of God?

Discussion

Just another thought to kick around and look at how we approach life, like a March storm sometimes and calm and meek another, like Jesus last days?

Hymn VU 530 All Beautiful March of Days

Prayer: Lord we pray for those who are constantly in a stormy unpredictable life. People, who have nothing, yet can retain their faith through everyday life storms while we complain about a bit of stormy weather. Help us Lord to be forever thankful for our daily existence and not be concerned about a bit of stormy weather. Amen

## **“April Showers Bring May Flowers”**

Devotion for April 2016

Hymn: VU 577 Peace Like a River

Scripture: Leviticus 26:4 and James 5:18

Reflection:

Like March, April has its own saying, “April showers bring May flowers”. Well, showers and or rain are a staple to life in our world. The Bible, both old and new has many, many references to rain. As necessary for life as water is we still treat it like a throw away: a disposable for the dump. Man seems to have a certain disdain for what God has provided. We destroy animals until they are no more, we destroy forests and drive the inhabitants out, we modify our food sources so they no longer nourish us, we pollute the oceans and all our water sources. Does God look at our world and frown or grimace. So how long?

Discussion:

Is there still hope that we can rebuild, correct all our errors or will we allow companies like Monsanto and Nestle’ just to name a couple really bad guys, to continue destroying God’s world.

Hymn VU 632 “Oh Blessed Spring”

Prayer:

God we thank you for the renewing rains of April. May we be ever mindful of your goodness, of the paradise you gave us, and give us the will to correct our errors and stop destroying our world.  
Amen

## **“Complexity and Beauty”**

Devotion for May 2016

Hymn: VU 703 In the bulb there is a flower.

Scripture: Mathew 6 28:30 and Song of Songs 2:12

Reflection:

Although we celebrate Easter as a renewal of life, May is usually nature's time to spring into life. We take so much for granted but if one really looks at flowers, tree leaves, even weeds. You cannot but look in wonder and marvel at the complexity and beauty. Who could possibly design such intricate and wondrous beauty, and have it grow at the same time. Hard to think nature could just start from nothing and evolve into all its various forms. If not the God we believe in, then some magical power must be about in our world.

Discussion:

According to so called experts, 90% of our food is genetically modified. Already we are aware of some nasty results. So, is it right that man interferes, changes and modifies some of Gods creations, or is this just part of man's role on this earth?

Hymn: VU My Lord What a Morning

Prayer:

Lord, may we always be thankful and mindful of your creations in nature. Forgive us if we do harm and change things that should not be changed. Please give us the knowledge and courage to really care for your earth that we are entrusted with. Amen

## **“When I can live or Die”**

Devotion for June 2016

Hymn: VU 705 For All the Saints vs 1 & 4

Scripture: 1 Samuel 31:4-6 & 2 Samuel 1: 9-10

Reflection:

As our government struggles, along with the dictate from the Supreme Court, on assisted suicide one has to wonder what the bible says about it. Well, on suicide, the bible says nothing, assisted may be a different matter. In any event my thought is that the government has no business telling me when I can live or die, and should I choose some assistance that is also none of their concern. They meddle in just about every aspect of our lives, while I think Jesus was pretty hands off. Love your neighbour, treat others etc. and if we did that, who needs the heavy hand of government to dictate our lives?

Discussion;

Do you think the government has the right, or is given the authority to tell us when we should exit this world? If so where did they get that from and what does the bible really say about it. If one is suffering daily, regardless at any age, and no cure is in sight who should make that decision besides that person. Remember Robert Latimer? Did he really commit a crime, or help his daughter end years of endless and needless suffering?

Hymn VU 493 Today I live

Prayer:

Lord, we are thankful, grateful and in awe of all living creatures and every life. We pray for guidance and wisdom to make the right decisions when life for us, or family members becomes intolerable. Show us the way and help us make the right decision. Amen

## **“Our Time Must Be Coming”**

Devotion for July 2016

Hymn: VU493 Today I Live

Scripture: Matthew 5:4 & Romans 14:7-9

### Reflection:

We just attended two funerals. One was for a past minister who was a great AOTS supporter and the other for Betty Watson. Most of us knew her and Craig for their great musical talents at our AOTS spring roundups. Attending funerals seems to be a popular pastime once one gets to a certain age, or stage in life. Makes one think, if we dare to do so, that our time must be coming soon too. So, we wonder how much we have contributed, or not, what kind of mess we are going to leave for our kids, who will take care of those left behind. Will we be able to eavesdrop on our Celebration of Life, which seems to be the current term for funerals, wakes and otherwise end of life services. What they say, be they children, other relatives, or just friends: will it be from the heart or just platitudes that are expected of them, but not real feelings. Do we deserve real accolades or just empty words. What they think and what we think may well be completely different. Fortunately for us through the love and grace of God it is never too late; never too late to ask forgiveness if we have caused harm to someone, never too late to tell family we love them.

### Discussion.

The end can come at any age but certainly older is closer, so let's talk about, is our will complete, up to date, are there relatives—friends that we should be apologizing too, checking on their health, making sure all our assets and messes are looked after?

Hymn: VU 278 In the Quiet Curve of Evening

Prayer, Lord as we get closer to the last sunset we are so grateful for our lives, our families and all those good times you have provided for us. Please forgive all our failures, our past mistakes and make us worthy to enter your kingdom whenever you call. Amen

## **“God’s Creation”**

Devotion for August 2016

Hymn: VU 297: All Praise to You

Scripture: Genesis 9:22 and Leviticus 26:5

Reflection:

Drive around the back roads, and the creation is everywhere. The corn is getting higher, the grains are about ready, the third cut of hay is underway and fresh vegetables are sprouting up and overflowing the farmers markets. Yes weeds are a pain but when will we realize what we are doing by genetic modification. Through the magic and ingenuity of science man is able to change the make-up of many seeds, but what we can't do is create a seed from nothing. Just think of the wonder of a tomato seed or a kernel of corn once they are put in the earth. Harvest time is a great time to witness the wonder and bountiful world we live in and marvel at God's creation. Human life being created is about the only thing as wondrous and magical as the fruits of the fields.

Discussion;

I wonder if we ever take time to really realize, to think about the wonder that is in every small seed. Let's talk about this miracle.

Hymn VU 227: For the Fruit of All Creation

Prayer;

For the food, the farmers, all those who provide our daily nourishment we are thankful lord, but most of all thankful for the One who created the seed, the soil, sun and the rain to make seeds turn into the miracles they become. Amen



## “After the Lazy Summer”

Devotion for September 2016

Hymn: VU 223 Eternal, Unchanging, We sing

Scripture: Isaiah: 24 4-5 & Psalm: 24 1-2

Reflection:

Labour Day, first day of school, back to the normal routine, seems September spells all of that. It's as if a new life begins after the lazy summer. Did those events exist in Jesus time or was September just another month? Life then was not ruled by a calendar but by the season; planting, harvesting, storing and waiting for the next spring. In most countries the sun was the year and the moon was the guide for time. Man was ruled by nature not a calendar. Today, with all our gadgets and knowledge the more we seem to learn about nature, about the heavens and the world around us the more the questions pop up and the farther away the answers seem. To understand the mind of God is not for us. The mystery only deepens. September today is just another step on the endless journey and our calendar notwithstanding; we are still ruled by nature.

Discussion;

Do we realize how much God still really controls and shapes our lives through nature?

Hymn VU 300 God Whose Farm Is all Creation

Prayer; Lord, seems we have gone from living with nature to trying to control it and seems every step we take we just mess up more. Well Lord, I am not sure we have found the answer yet as our greed seems to get in the way to correcting the mess we have made so we need your help. Please show us the way, help our leaders make the right decisions to correct our mistakes so our children and grandchildren can live with the nature you provided for us. Amen

# “Thanksgiving”

Devotion for October 2016

Hymn: VU520 We Plough The Fields

Scripture: Psalm 95: 2-3 And 1 Timothy 4:4-5

Reflection:

October tenth is Thanksgiving Day. At a certain age one wonders why we need a special day as we should be thankful for each one. Every day should be Thanksgiving. While searching for an October theme I did some checking and found, Oct 2 is world Communion Sunday: Oct 16 is world Food Sunday: Oct 17 is the International day for the eradication of Poverty: Oct 23 is Peace Sunday, and those are just some of the special days in October. You know, we once had Christmas, New Years, Valentines, Mother’s Day and a few other special days; they actually meant something. The introduction of a day for just about everything is like everyone being retired, a holiday providing a long week-end means nothing. When we dedicate a day to eradicating poverty, to end wars, to feed everyone, we just treat the symptoms and ignore the cause. Poverty won’t stop when the price of food is out of reach or unavailable for those in need while one percent of the population controls ninety percent of the wealth; wars wont cease as long as power hungry despots are allowed to be in control and those with the power make and sell arms to those despots.

Discussion;

Pretend we are in, lets say grade three or four, and the teacher says, “lets make a list of all the things we are thankful for. You shout them out and I will write them on this board.” I suspect we think, at our age, this is a stupid, perhaps childish exercise; however, try and be amazed at how unbelievably fortunate, lucky we are and how we so much take our privileged lives for granted.

Hymn VU 513 Give me, Lord a Thankful Heart

Prayer;

God, open our eyes, help us realize we should be truly thankful not only on Thanksgiving, nor generous and concerned on other special days, but every day. As the saying goes, every morning you wake up is a great day. Thank you Jesus. Amen

## **“Afraid of Our Faith?”**

Devotion for November 2016

Hymn: VU 587 A Prayer For Hope.

Scripture: Jeremiah 29:12 and Mark 11:24-27

Reflection:

Not sure about other provinces but in Ontario no Lord's prayer in schools and also out in most municipal proceedings as well. No references to Christianity at all allowed. We have become pretty much an atheist or at least an agnostic nation in public; but in Ottawa it is a different story, at least behind closed doors. Each Wednesday morning when the house is sitting there is a Parliamentary Prayer Breakfast centered around Jesus, but open to all faiths. Then once a year there is a National one; next year it is slated for May 17, in Ottawa of course. The public is invited and tickets are available. And you thought we were no longer a Christian nation! What would Jesus's take be on that?

Discussion:

If we are not afraid of our faith why not talk about prayer. Is there really a God to pray to or is it just a mind thing? Does it work? Do you pray and do you have any personal experiences to share? I have, so maybe next time!

Hymn VU 568 Dear Lord Lead Me Day by Day

Prayer: Well Lord, this is difficult. You know we expect instant results when we pray and sometimes that does happen and sometimes it happens and we don't recognize it and wonder if prayer is just a waste of time, or perhaps you are out doing something and did not hear us. We finally learn that our prayers should be prayers of thanks not requests. Our one request should be for the strength to accept, to understand and be thankful. We offer this prayer in the name of Jesus. Amen

## “Christ back in Christmas”

Devotion for December 2016

Hymn: VU.44 It Came Upon a Midnight Clear

Scripture: Isaiah 9:6 Luke 2: 13-14

Reflection

Some years ago there was a young couple who attended our church. They had two young boys. This couple were very involved in Sunday School and all other church work. It was Christmas time and Paul the father said to me, “sure wish we could put Christ back in Christmas”. He was stunned at my response, “I don’t. He was never there.” Of course we all know according to the experts, Christ was born in March or April and when he was alive and preaching Christmas did not exist. Christmas did not come into existence for centuries after his death and mainly to appease those non-Christians. Christ’s birthday was an added extra to appeal to those believers. Christmas is a great good feeling time of year: be nice to everyone: watch Home Alone and then Jimmy Stewart on TV: make the CR CD companies happy and maybe even go to Midnight Mass, or its equivalent protestant service and pretend that this is really a celebration about the birth of a baby! A special baby.

Discussion;

If we took the shopping equation out of December the 25<sup>th</sup> how many people do you think would really be interested in Christmas? We do all enjoy the hymns though. Something to talk about!

Hymn VU: 43 Go Tell It on the Mountain

Prayer; Well God, it is that time of year again, and you know it does foster good will in most people along with generosity for the poor, the homeless and anyone less fortunate. Contrary to your wishes that generous feeling seems to dissipate within a few days after December 25. Most of us are very thankful for our lives and what we have but I guess what we would ask, wish for and pray is that somehow the Christmas spirit would stick around for the other 364 days of the year. In Jesus name we pray, amen