

New Ways of Service for the New Year?

Christmas is over. Many of us recognize this with a mixture of regret and relief. On the one hand, we are glad to have all the preparations and extra busyness behind us. On the other hand, we love so much about Christmas and don't want it to pass so quickly. But here we are with another Christmas behind us. That means we have a New Year before us.

We don't approach New Year's Day with the same excitement as we have about Christmas. While we focus on the past at Christmas as we give our attention to the familiar and wonderful story of the birth of Jesus, we look to unfamiliar territory as we start the New Year. The future by its very nature is a realm of the unknown. It is filled with unrealized possibility, unnamed problems and yet to be disclosed blessings. New.

Our faith is all about "new." First of all, Jesus said, "I give you a **new** commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another" (John 13:34). We live "in the **new** life of the Spirit" (Romans 7:6). We are to open our spiritual eyes and "see, everything has become **new!**" (2 Corinthians 5:17). We are to understand that we are part of "one **new** humanity" created by Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:15). As followers of Jesus we "have clothed ourselves with the **new** self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator" (Colossians 3:10). God "has given us a **new** birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3). Finally, "we wait for **new** heavens and a **new** earth, where righteousness is at home" (1 Peter 3:13).

What is going to be new for you in the New Year? Aside from the many unpredictables, what changes will you choose during the next twelve months? In particular, what will be new in your life of faith? As followers of Jesus it is important to ask ourselves whether God is calling us to serve in some new way. I don't think there is any intrinsic value in being busy but I do believe the Lord calls us to be active in service. How is God calling you to serve?

Do you have talents you haven't been using? Do you have abilities that you aren't employing? Do you have positive passions that you have not followed? I recall the marvelous words of the novelist/minister Frederick Buechner: "Your vocation in life is where your greatest joy meets the world's greatest need." Where does your joy/talent/passion intersect with the world's need? Jesus taught that we find greatness in the service we do (Luke 22:26-27). In what new ways of service might God be calling you personally as we enter the New Year? I hope you will ponder that question in your heart and bring it before God in your prayers so your life will be richer and fuller in coming months.