

**January 1, 2016**  
**New Year Sermon**  
**Doug Smith**

The New Year is about reflection and resolve and so this; the first Sunday of 2016 is a good a time for us to take a few moments to look forward and consider how we might deepen our roots of faith in the 52 weeks ahead of us.

Spiritual formation is a core value for us and our hope for all in this community is that no matter the point of faith we're at today – we would, in this year ahead, find ourselves going deeper in our relationship with Jesus. None of us can be sure of what we'll face in 2016 but we can be certain of this – if we walk it out strongly with Jesus we'll be at the best possible place we can be; the place we were meant to be.

- Jeremiah 17. 7-8

**Drop**

A great first step in this New Year is to determine to drop what we need to follow God fully. These are the things that have come into our lives that have distracted or called us away from a meaningful relationship with Jesus.

There may be things you are carrying alone into this New Year that aren't idols but weights that at the very least distract you and eve worse oppress you. If you can't see them, but you feel them - ask the Holy Spirit's help to identify those things that are weighing you down so you can gain the spiritual health and vitality the Lord desires for you. The weight of un-forgiveness, the weight of worry, the weight of addiction, the weight of self-loathing, the weight of selfishness, the weight of fear.

- Matthew 11. 28-30
- Romans 12.1-2

**Decide**

Decide on faith, everyday. While there was a level of belief in the man who wanted Jesus to heal his hurting son, he had limited faith that held him back from believing that, "Anything is possible if a person believes." He had to decide to believe; it was hard, he asked Jesus to help him get there and Jesus healed his son.

Perhaps we think that miracles are unlikely and no longer expected, or that God is disinterested in parting the seas in this age, that we are far too sophisticated in our studies and theology to pray for an anticipate loaves and fishes to multiply to feed thousands right in front of us today. Oh God, help us in our unbelief!

Deciding takes our intentionality, it means facing our unbelief square in the eye and

saying no to its persuasive hold even when doubt is the more comfortable position. Yes instead of no. Belief instead of unbelief. The impossible becoming possible! Every day.

- Mark 9
- 1 John 5. 4-5

## **Depend**

Depending on God is easy on the good days – it is in the darker days our trust in God is put to the test. In the darkness can we believe God has our best interests at heart? When you lose a loved one, when you lose financial security, a job, a golden opportunity – when you are diagnosed with cancer.

- Isaiah 40. 31

## **Do**

If our faith doesn't bring us some form of loving engagement it doesn't bring us life and where there is no life there is death. "Doing is vital to vitality". We're here on this planet and in this culture for a purpose that stretches beyond us to a broken world that needs our hearts, our hands and our feet. The expectation is when Christ's Spirit is in us our natural response is to love God and to love others; not only with good words but also in tangible actions. It is in the doing that the world sees Jesus in us.

How will your heart lead your hands and feet to action this year? Perhaps before signing up for the gym or dance lessons or for hockey in this New Year – consider serving another. Good deeds bring life to others and to you!

- James 2.14-17
- 1 John 3. 18-19

## **Devoted**

Our devotion is really a reflection of God's pursuit of us; in other words our devotion describes our pursuit of Him. And while our devotion has specific expressions – like dipping into the well of the word and having real time and real life conversations with Jesus – it is more about our day to day living with and loving the One who made a way back for us and into His family through the Cross.

- Matthew 22. 37-38

## **Discussion Questions**

- What word stood out to you from the sermon? What word draws you? Why?
- Has God ever spoken to you about any of these words in the past? What has come of that? Does anyone have any stories?
- What word is daunting or challenging to you? Why?
- What word is comforting or “burden lifting” to you? Why?