

This Sermon was written by Rev. Gary Smith for the First Congregational Church

## Happy New You

1-3-2021

Isaiah 42:5-10 and 2Corinthians 5:16-21

There is one more unwrapped present under your tree to open. In it you will find a winning lottery ticket that will grant you \$1,440 which will be directly deposited into your account each and every day of 2021. If you do the math you will discover that over this new year that would amount to \$525, 600. But there is one stipulation, you have to spend it all each and every day. Any remaining balance at day's end will be lost. This is true and is happening to all of us. Each of us will receive 1,440 minutes each day in 2021. Surely you have heard the expression, "time is money." Whatever time we waste will be lost but come tomorrow we will receive 1,440 more. There is equality for all, for everyone, the millionaire and the destitute will get the same amount.

"I am the new year. I am unused, unspotted, without blemish. I stretch before you 365 days. I will present each day in its turn, a new leaf in the book of life, for you to place your imprint upon. I am the new year. Each hour of each day I will give you sixty minutes that you have never had before or will have again. Fresh and pure I present them. It remains for you to fill them with 60 jeweled seconds of love, hope, prayer and trust in God. I am the new year. I am coming but once and I can never be recalled. Make me your best."

As we begin a new year I would suggest taking a new attitude, one of happiness and hopefulness. We celebrate a happy new year to make a happy new you. You have a choice to make. Do you desire to be positive or negative, optimistic or pessimistic?

An Army Airborne Ranger was learning to parachute. The sergeant barked out the orders: 1. Jump when you are told to jump; 2. Count to ten, then pull the ripcord; 3. If the first chute doesn't open pull the second one; 4. When you land, a truck will take you back to the post.

When the plane was over the landing zone, the soldier jumped when it was his turn. He counted to 10 and pulled the ripcord. Nothing happened; so he pulled the second but nothing happened. "Oh, great!" he complained to himself, "I bet the truck won't be waiting for us either."

Several years ago there was a movie produced and directed by Robert Redford called the *Beanfield War*. The film opened with a wide-angle view of a barren desert landscape. The earth was cracked, brown and windswept. Much like the terrain between Boise and Mountain Home. It was morning and the sun was already drying out whatever moisture had been there the night before. As the camera panned in closer, a tumbled-down shack came into view. Inside was an old man asleep on a hard, narrow cot. He slowly awoke and painfully rose from the bed. He shuffled over to a mirror on the wall, staring at his wrinkled face. Yet his first words were, "Thank you, God, for allowing me to wake and see another day."

Each of us can choose an attitude with the same words, "Good Lord, morning" or "Good morning, Lord." The scripture instructs us to approach each new day with the attitude, "This is the day the Lord has made. I will rejoice and be glad in it."

A study was done of approximately 40,000 people in the world who are now over 100 years old. What they had in common was not their diet or their exercise routines. The trait they all shared was that they continued to be engaged in life; they interacted with other people. They worked in their gardens. They took interest in the world around them. They had a sense of humor and laughed and cried often.

So how do we develop a happy, wholesome attitude? We start with forgiveness. Forgiveness is the key to happiness. Jesus practiced it and passed it on to his disciples in his prayer, "forgive us our sins as we forgive the sins of others." By doing so we release not only the other person but ourselves from guilt. Let go of past failures and disappointments. The same is true of worry. Jesus said, "Do not fear, only believe." Letting go of fear and worry allows us to experience freedom and trust in God to provide a brighter future for us.

When we do let go, the Scripture is fulfilled, "If anyone is in Christ, behold, a new creation, the old has passed away, the new has come." God is in ultimate control. There will be difficult times in this new year but God will be with us. Trust God and live that new life in Christ. Build your life upon the foundation of faith you have in Jesus.

In the 17th Century the central portion of London burned to the ground. Following an outpouring of grief, the people of London pulled together and committed themselves to build a new brighter, bigger city by widening the narrow twisted streets. The great architect, Sir Christopher Wren was commissioned to draw up plans. St. Paul's Cathedral was to be the center of the city. Once that was started there was great interest and cooperation. But when it was time to plan out the streets and the individual properties, people began insisting that their houses be rebuild exactly where the old ones had been before the fire. In the end a new and better London was not built because everyone built upon their former foundation. So what foundation are you building on this new year? I recommend the one the Apostle Paul wrote about, "For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus." If you do, you give yourself the opportunity to find true happiness.

There was a little clock who complained to the watch maker, "I just can't go on ticking 60 seconds every minute, 60 minutes every hour, 24 hours a day for 365 days. That's over 3 million ticks in 2021." The wise watch maker said, "Can you not tick one tock at a time?" "Oh yes!" "Then that is all that is required of you."

So take a breath, and another and live one day at a time. Leave the future in God's hands and God will give you the strength to go living.

Happy New Year! Happy New You!