

# Make Church a Part of Your Life

## WEEKLY SERMONETTE

*"Happy New Year – Again!!"*

By Pastor Ed Woods - Almena/Norcatour/Clayton  
United Methodist Churches

Happy New Year – again. We've all heard it time and again for the last two weeks, and by now, it is probably getting old. I can understand the first time you see someone new, for the first few days (maybe hours) of a year, but by now, yes, it is definitely getting old.

What else is already old with you this year? How about any resolutions you have made? Are any still intact? (This year, I resolved not to make any resolutions at all; so far I am keeping it completely and very happy in the process.) But seriously, how is the year faring for all of you?

We all come into new years – any new year – with hopes that it will all be different from the previous year, and we all start out with good intentions, and in the first few weeks, we have abandoned all hope of the year being better and we settle into the same old grind and wait til the next year. And as we settle into that grind, we find that it has become a rut, growing deeper every year. And as I was told one time, a rut is nothing but a grave with the ends knocked out.

So how can we make this year better, even if we have already given up on it? Well the short answer is that we – you and I – can't. Yes, that is exactly what I said; you and I cannot do anything in our own power to make the year any better. No matter how hard we work to change events to make the year better, our own feelings and emotions will doom us to failure.

So now you are thinking, "Thanks a lot for really cheering me down, pastor. Where do I go from this hole you've dropped me into?" If you will look back, didn't I say that we could not do anything in OUR power to make things better? The emphasis is on the phrase "in our power".

We try, but our own strength is futile. Paul, however, put it in proper perspective when he wrote in Romans 8, "in all

these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us".

He is speaking here of Jesus, who has created not just the world but every second of every day in all of creation. What is our mental and physical strength compared to that of Jesus? Our frustrations and impatience are taken away by Him. When we refocus our lives away from our own desires to what God has

in store for us, then God can lift us from our rut (endless grave) and put us on a new path.

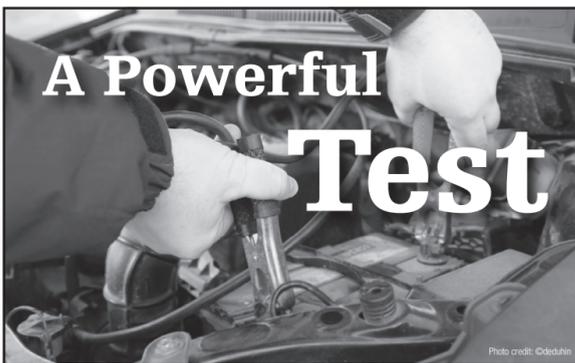
So it is not in our own power that we achieve real joy, but by allowing God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit to freely operate in our lives. This is the time to reflect on that, isn't it? We are at the time of a new beginning and for some things, we can still look forward to a better way while we are still in our "new year" mode.

Just how do we get started? Prayer, prayer and more prayer. Ask God to forgive us for what we did and did not do last year. Then ask Him to help you to work with what He wants you to do this year.

Next, set aside time this year to study the Bible and read all the way through it this year. All it takes is about 4 chapters a day and you will succeed on this.

But the important part of all this is that God will work with those who sincerely believe that He is who He says He is and will do what He says He will. He doesn't lie and He is faithful.

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me," Paul wrote in Philippians. As this year starts, why not let this be your maxim and guide for the year. Let Christ be your strength and we will all see 2011 be more than we could even imagine it to be. May God bless each of you and I encourage all of you to worship with your church this week.



**A Powerful Test**

There's nothing like a bitter cold morning to test the car battery; it might be in need of a charge. Life can be like that, too, everything runs smoothly until a crisis. Will your spirit be fully charged and ready to handle it? "Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit," says Psalm 147:5. Life's disasters won't find us unprepared when we draw on God for power. Visit your house of worship each week to strengthen your spirit; keep the spark ignited with daily prayer and meditation.

Weekly Scripture Reading						
Matthew 4:12-25	Matthew 8:1-17	Matthew 8:18-34	Matthew 9:1-17	Matthew 9:18-38	Matthew 10:1-25	Matthew 10:26-42

Scriptures Selected by The American Bible Society  
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