

New Year, New You!

Pastor Aker's Page

Faith Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls, SD

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To be honest, New Year's Day is probably my least favorite "holiday". Being exactly one week after Christmas, perhaps the day is merely a victim of timing – maybe if it happened in August or September it would seem more exciting. It's like we're having so much fun celebrating things that we decide to keep the party going by accentuating the fact that we just bought a new calendar. I don't get it.

Probably what gets me most of all, however, is the sincere expectation that simply because it's now 2019 things will somehow change. We resolve great and lofty goals. Interesting how even our most sincere resolutions quickly appear as fanciful as the promises made by a politician running for re-election. How quickly our resolve falters. Gym memberships and attendance peaks the first couple weeks of January, but precipitously drops over the next several weeks. I've been there myself too many times! For me, this all adds up to a bogus "holiday" masquerading as a genuine festival.

Okay, I'm done bashing New Year's Day. Now let's talk about Jesus! The rallying cry of every New Year is something to the effect of "New Year, New Me"! It's almost breathtaking just how biblical this concept is! As our many failed resolutions have taught us over the years, there's much we're simply incapable of changing on our own. "New year, new you" – yes, with the help of the Lord!

Jesus is the One who works His miracles in our lives. The miracles begin with a re-creation of who you are. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new," Paul, 2 Corinthians 5:17. "Behold, I make all things new," Jesus, Revelation 21:5. Turns out if you're interested in truly turning over a new leaf, we know a Guy who can help! In fact, He's literally *dying* to help. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Lord, ushers in the changes for which we long. We are a people pining for change within ourselves; Jesus is happy to oblige us.

That being said, perhaps New Year's has some redeeming qualities. It seems to be a rare opportunity taken many to be brutally honest about themselves, recognizing and naming their shortcomings. What a perfect opportunity for individual Confession and Absolution with your pastor! On New Year's Day, we stand ready to take the necessary steps to change our lives. What a perfect opportunity to receive the sustaining nourishment of Jesus' body and blood offered in the Sacrament! As the new year dawns, we seem most ready to hear a word perhaps we don't so much long for the rest of the year. What a perfect opportunity to return to regular worship attendance at Faith Lutheran Church where the Truth pours forth from the mouths of two of Christ's servants every week!

Jesus is the One who changes us! That is to say, it is Jesus who provides us with lasting change! The kind of change we sincerely mean for when we make our January 1st declarations of modifications and life transformations. Teaming up with Jesus, we can actually accomplish great things. In Him, you already are a new creation! You are one of the countless things He has made new! May it be granted you this new year to truly hear this wonderful message and take it to heart. The old has gone, the new has come. You are new. Because you live in Christ and He lives in you, there is no limit to what you are able to accomplish. You're teaming up with the Creator of the universe! Nothing stands in Jesus' way.

I guess New Year's isn't that bad after all. It is yet another opportunity for us to be drawn closer to Jesus. To put our lives and our trust completely in His hands and live out our belief that He won't let us down. Well, then, bring on the New Year's celebration! New year, new you . . . in Christ!

Christ's peace,
Pastor Corey Aker