

*(For a full understanding of this sermon you must also read Colossians 1:4-6, 9-14 and some texts from the life of King David, including 2 Samuel 6:17-23, 13:1-33, 15:13ff; 1 Kings 1:5ff)*

Happy New Year! Have you made your resolutions yet? Today's Psalm is a resolution. King David, the author, determined a new course of action. He states an unwavering purpose. Have you determined a new course of action for this year?

This Psalm shows the joyful result of his resolution. David hit the jackpot with his resolution, in terms of results. Perhaps that will encourage you to go for it – make the resolution David made.

David's life was filled with problems. He needed a new start. Perhaps he made resolutions before and failed. Would you like to begin this year new? Does your spiritual life need a renewed focus or infusion of God's power? Do you need help? When David wrote this Psalm he was in exactly that place. He writes:

My life is  
*a desolate pit  
a miry bog  
My sins are piled so high they are past counting  
I'm so swamped by guilt I can't see my way clear  
I've lost courage  
I'm in despair*

Can you identify? David was overwhelmed, so he made a resolution. Let's listen to David's resolution. Here it is:

*He resolved to become absolutely devoted to God.*

His life was a revolving door of pain. He turned to God. Listen to his prayer. (Psalm 40:11-15 please note that you will not read this Psalm straight through for this message.)

We know a lot about David and how he lived his life from the Bible. His failures are plain to see. He failed in relationships. You know the story of David and Bathsheba. He failed in marriage and he failed as a father. His powerful position in government meant enemies constantly challenged his authority. The Bible tells us how he handled these affairs – some for better and some for worse. (see 2 Samuel & 1 Kings texts as listed above) But when he wrote this Psalm his life events were extremely challenging so he resolved to do something different to get out of the revolving door of pain.

*He resolved to wait for God.*

It changed his life dramatically. It changed him so much he could not stop talking about it. READ Psalm 40:9-10. God helped him. God's justice happened for him! God turned his life around. He was not destroyed or humiliated because he turned to God. And, he was astounded by God's intervention. He said (40:1-2):

*I waited patiently for the LORD to help me, and he turned to me and heard my cry. <sup>2</sup> He lifted me out of the pit of despair, out of the mud and the mire. He set my feet on solid ground and steadied me as I walked along.*

Does that describe your relationship with God? Do you sincerely turn to God when you have problems, seeing God as a true solution? Or, do you rely on yourself? Would you like to trust God like David describes? David continues (40:3-4):

*<sup>3</sup> He has given me a new song to sing, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see what he has done and be amazed. They will put their trust in the LORD. <sup>4</sup> Oh, the joys of those who trust the LORD, who have no confidence in the proud or in those who worship idols.*

David's experience of God was so great that when he turned to God and waited on him he became a completely new man. It's as if he had discovered a whole new way of living.

Would you like to experience God in that way this year?

This is not a naïve, incapable man. This was spoken by a man with huge responsibilities; a leader of a nation; a man of tremendous power. He certainly could have been one of the "proud" he speaks about; he had full control. But David learned there was something better than being in control himself, which is what "the proud" do. If you are "the proud," that means you do not see beyond yourself; you believe you can manage your own life and the lives of other people better. A proud person is without heavenly perspective.

Which category are you in? That of "the proud," or, do you allow God to control your life?

Now for a man of considerable power, it must have been hard for David to let God have control. But David made a great discovery. As he let go he discovered the very meaning of living by faith. He discovered what "being religious" really means (40:6-8):

*<sup>6</sup> You take no delight in sacrifices or offerings. Now that you have made me listen, I finally understand-- you don't require burnt offerings or sin offerings. <sup>7</sup> Then I said, "Look, I have come. As is written about me in the Scriptures: <sup>8</sup> I take joy in doing your will, my God, for your instructions are written on my heart."*

David's religion quit being a duty on the outside; it became heart driven.

Now the New Testament describes it like this in Colossians: *Hearing and understanding God's truth bears fruit by changing lives. How does it change your life? By knowing God better and better, and thus doing God's will.*

It means as you know God better you shift away from self-driven desires to having a heart for God. What you need to know is that this is a gain for you.

Are you driven by your own will? God's will is better, more satisfying, more hopeful.

Now you may think of God's will as relating to specifics, but that is erroneous. God's will is an overarching way of life. You live your life in the light of God's heavenly perspective. Then, you anticipate God's miracles to help you. It's about not living life on your own volition, but coupling with God – who is lovingly present and who changes your future. God leads you in the specifics as you patiently live hand in hand with God, no matter what the circumstances.

David said, "Living in God's presence steadied me."

How did David change? He quit living in the past pit of despair which living in his own power had created.

If you wonder this morning, how can my life be changed? How can I look forward to new beginnings? You assess the past truthfully, acknowledge the problem and resolve to absolutely devote yourself to God's will. What is God's will? It's an overarching way of life lived with a heavenly perspective, and the anticipation of God's miracles to help you.

*(This next part is for longtime members of this congregation. If you are not a member or are a new member, you can simply apply the following exercise personally.)*

This morning in anticipation of next Saturday's (pastor) installation service, we need to assess the past as a congregation in preparation for our new beginning together. Now as you entered the sanctuary, you noticed pictures on the wall of six pastors. Six interim pastors served as well, far too many for 44 years. That alone tells you it has been a rough road, for you and for them. When I came in March, 2008 as your part-time "Stated Supply" pastor, your elders described the church as barely hanging on. I could feel the discouragement and despair.

Now God is interesting. God can be a major problem when you resist, or God can act miraculously to reverse the problem when you turn to Him. Together you began to turn to Him, listen to God's Word, and let it change you. What God did here is reverse the problem. God began to perform amazing wonders in and through you, magnificent things. And God helped you to reverse the decline and move in the opposite direction. David says it like this (Psalm 40:5):

*<sup>5</sup> O LORD my God, you have performed many wonders for us. Your plans for us are too numerous to list. You have no equal. If I tried to recite all your wonderful deeds, I would never come to the end of them.*

God is all about new beginnings. Now it's time to embrace the new beginning.

The way to do that is to resolve to let go of the past – the past way of doing things and the past hurt. You have received an index card. Take that card and write down one magnificent thing God did last year, either in this church or in your life. Then, turn over the card and write down the thing that you consider your "pit," whether it's a person or circumstance. Now, write these words below it.

Resolution: "I let go of this."

Now turn the card over once again. Write “I take joy in Your will for me” and “I take joy in Your will for this church.” Put the date on the card so when you forget, you can look at your resolution and live by it.

Like David, God will lift you out of the pit and into a new future. Expect miracles. Halleluiah!

AMEN