

New Year's Resolutions

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Our Savior's Way Lutheran Church

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Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Well...Did you make a New Year's resolution for the new year? We finally made it to 2021. Last year most people probably made the same resolutions as they had in the past. Not giving too much thought – losing weight and spending more time with family – but after last year with all the additional time at home, maybe this year is different with a different New Year's resolution.

New Year's resolutions go back thousands of years to the time of the Babylonians. When they promised to return things that they had borrowed and to settle their debts. Later, the Romans would make vows to their gods. Medieval knights would renew their vows of chivalry. And in 1920, Methodist Bishop, John Vincent wrote: *“Every morning of the New Year, I will this day try to live a simple and sincere life, repelling promptly every thought of discontent, anxiety, discouragement, impurity, and self-seeking, cultivating cheerfulness, magnanimity, charity, and the habit of holy silence, exercising economy in expenditure, carefulness in conversation, diligence in appointed service, fidelity to every trust, and a child-like trust in God.”*

This morning, we heard about a child-like faith when Jesus was 12 years old. It's also considered to be one of the seven sorrows of Mary in the Catholic church because it was a rather troubling time for Mary and her husband, Joseph. But it's also significant for us because Jesus shares with us one of the best New Year's resolutions that you can make for 2021. In our Gospel reading, we learn that Mary and Joseph were faithful in making their annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem in order to celebrate the Passover. Jesus went with them, walking some 120 miles over the course of three to four days, taking them from their hometown of Nazareth to Jerusalem, where there would be crowds of people gathering to celebrate.

It was after the week-long celebration as they made their way home that Mary and Joseph realized that something was wrong. They, along with their family and friends, most likely had joined in with one of the other large groups of people heading out of town. Walking and talking as they made their way; the time must've gone by quickly. The adults with the adults, and the children forming their own group would play and have fun along the way. But when they stopped after a day's walk from Jerusalem, Mary and Joseph couldn't find Jesus. He wasn't with the other children or with the rest of the group. Now, I'm sure, like most parents, panic and anxiety began to set in as they frantically looked for Him. There are lots of reasons why a child might go missing – and not many of them are very good. They retraced their steps back to Jerusalem and they continued to look for Him for three days. You can only imagine the questions that were going through their minds – is He lost? Was He taken? Is He hurt? Where did He go?!! And finally, they found Him in the temple sitting among the

teachers, listening to them, and asking them questions. And yet, we're told in verse 47, ***"...all who heard Him, were amazed at His understanding, and His answers."***

Our text tells us that His parents were ***"astonished."*** But I'm not thinking that was in a good way because Mary says to Him, ***"Why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously looking for you."*** And instead of apologizing, Jesus said to her, ***"Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"*** While Mary and Joseph didn't understand what He was saying, Jesus knew – even at that young age – that He was the Son of God. He knew that His purpose in life wasn't just to play and grow up to become a faithful man of God. He knew that He was on earth for a greater purpose – in order to fulfill a divine mission, to be the Savior. And part of that mission was to spend time in the Word of God – listening to those who taught the faith, asking them questions and taking in all that the Holy Scriptures had to share. That was why He was in His Father's house and why it was so important that He was missing from those who returned from Jerusalem right after the Passover celebration.

Over time, He would become the greatest of all teachers. And yet, even more important, He was obedient to the Father's will in fulfilling His ultimate mission – by dying on the cross and on the third day, rising again, so that He might be the Savior of all who would believe in Him. And yet, even as a 12-year-old, still obedient to His parents, He returned home to Nazareth with Mary and Joseph. He was submissive to them, knowing the mission His Heavenly

Father had given Him. To be our Savior – through His death and resurrection.

I don't know if you realize it or not, but you and I have a divine mission too! We're not just here to work, pay bills, raise children, and retire. That's not why God gave us life. We have a far greater purpose and in order to understand that purpose, we need to listen to the Word of God, so that it's part of our daily life. Prayerfully, confess to Him those things in our life that aren't consistent with His will, and receive the forgiveness that Jesus won for us. And the Holy Spirit will begin to bring about changes in our life so that our life might glorify Him allowing us to grow spiritual in maturity as we live out our days here on earth.

Over the course of this past year it's been possible for many to fulfill the New Year's resolutions of the past. To spend more time with loved ones, to get out and exercise more, maybe even to lose the weight and to save more money. But, if you haven't already, there is one resolution that you can make for the coming year. That is, more than ever before, to attend to the mission that God has given to you, not forgetting to join in the mission of Our Savior's Way given to our church years ago now, which is to glorify God and make disciples for Jesus.

You're here today either in person or online because of His Grace and the Salvation that He brings and it's also by His grace through faith that we'll continue to be blessed in the coming year so that we might live with Him both now and always. In Jesus' name, Amen.