

Good morning and Happy New Year! Today we celebrate the 2nd Sunday after Christmas. This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it!

I was doing a search on the Internet this week for the top 5 New Year's resolutions for 2022. I would like to share a few of these with you in no particular order:

1. Do your bit for the Environment: Go Vegan or adopt a zero-waste lifestyle. Take baby steps by incorporating one plant-based meal into your diet. Donate your clothes or shop at a thrift store when you can. Carry a reusable tote bag to the supermarket.
2. Be kind to yourself and others: Before you start your day, think of how you can add a sprinkle of positivity to your day and others'.
3. Change your look: Lose weight and commit to a fitness program.
4. Try a new recipe each week: Cook instead of ordering out.
5. Get more sleep. Surveys have shown 59% of respondents average less than 6 hours of sleep per night in 2020. But better sleep is essential for overall health and clocking 8 hours a night offers many benefits.

Are any of these items on your New Year's resolution list for 2022? I would be willing to guess that some of us do not want to make any New Year's resolutions. After all New Year's resolutions are only valid until the middle of February when we can give them up for Lent.

Another way to look at a New Year's resolution is achieving a goal. I believe one of the key elements in achieving a goal is to have a solid understanding of where you are going. Perhaps something you can picture in your mind of where you would like to be within a certain time frame. If we do not have goals, then we have a huge risk of not going anywhere.

After reading today's gospel lesson and other scriptures in the bible, let's come up with a plan on how we can make better resolutions.

#1. Realize YOU ARE incredible. Verse 16 says..." From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace." What is God's grace? This is the God's love, mercy and forgiveness given to us with no expectation of return. God's grace is not something we work hard for, pay for, or earn as a gift. All we have to do is accept it.

#2. I can do ANYTHING! (Philippians 4:13) I can do everything through Him who gives me strength. If God is at the center of your New Year's resolution it has a chance to be achieved, depending on your commitment to it. If it is in God's will for something to be fulfilled, he will enable you to fulfill it.

#3. Pray to the Lord for wisdom. (James 1:5). If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. Pray for wisdom as to how to fulfill the goals that God gives you. Rely on his strength to help you.

So, with the 3 items listed in our plan, how do we make better resolutions? **First, we need to realize that our plans may not be God's plans.** If we want to be successful with any New Year's resolution, we must seek God's will. **Second, you must WORK for it.**

James 5:7-8 says, Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.

The farmer waits patiently for the Lord to bring growth, but it does not mean he sits on his couch doing nothing. The farmer works hard by watering, weeding, operating and repairing equipment to help the crops grow. When the farmer does what a farmer is supposed to do then God is able to do the things only he can do.

Now let us look back at some of the resolutions we mentioned earlier. Would the Lord be honored if we took better care of our environment? What about changing our look by losing weight and exercising more? Would God support us to be more kind to ourselves and others? Absolutely! Most certainly the Lord can be in these things. However, just like the farmer, we must do our part whether its watching what we eat, exercising more, and making a conscious effort to be kind to others and appreciate ourselves.

But, why is it we tend to only make resolutions about ourselves? (Weight, exercise, eating better, etc.) Would God be honored if we made spiritual resolutions?

What about things like:

- Read the Bible daily
- Get involved more with the Church
- Share our faith with friends, family or even a stranger
- Make a step of faith that only God can make happen

So, what will it be my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ? What New Year's resolutions will you make this year? Amen.