

Happy New Year

Want a happy new year? Remember: Our hope is in the one who from the beginning of time has been working to show you that you are loved.

Happy New Year. Why do we wish every one a happy new year? Isn't it because we have a fresh new start? That is why I wanted to include all of our mistakes errors and sins of the past year in our confession and absolution so that in 2006 we have a fresh new start on life. A new start is great unless of course 2005 was an unbelievably great year and you didn't want it to end.

For the most part we have hopes that this year will be better than last. Or that it will be a fresh new start. There is a time for everything under heaven. This is a great time for change.

New year's is a great time for resolutions. We want things to go better this year, so we are going to make some changes in our life. We are going to work harder, work less, eat less, eat better. We are going to try and be better people, better Christians. We will be more organized or maybe we are going to try to be more laid back. We won't let the little things bother us.

Here are some funny things I found about New Year's resolutions: Now there are more overweight people in America than average-weight people. So overweight people are now average. Which means you've met your New Year's resolution.

RESOLUTION #10:

2002: I will go to church every Sunday.

2003: I will go to church as often as possible.

2004: I will set aside time each day for prayer and meditation.

2005: I will try to catch the late night sermonette on TV.

writes: Making resolutions is a cleansing ritual of self-assessment and repentance that demands personal honesty and, ultimately, reinforces humility. Breaking them is part of the cycle.

The problem with resolutions is that we usually break them. Some of us break them in record time. This can create other problems. We might become frustrated, depressed or hopeless because we didn't keep our resolution. How are things ever going

to get better. I can't even keep my resolutions. Some resolutions are unrealistic they become oppressive and can stress us out.

Paul complained in Romans: (Romans 7:18b-24) I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. 19 For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. 20 Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. 21 So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. 22 For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, 23 but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me

captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?

I am not trying to discourage you from making and keeping your resolutions. I am warning you that they can be an opportunity for the evil one to try to make you feel depressed, stresses and hopeless.

We need to remember that our ultimate hope does not lie in our getting our act together. Our hope is in the one who from the beginning of time has been working to show you that you are loved.

This past half year in confirmation class we have been studying how God like a lover has been pursuing his beloved. That would be us. We are God's beloved.

I want to briefly review some events in what is called salvation history that lead up to the birth we just celebrated. History shows us that we have made mistakes. But it also shows us that God doesn't abandon us when we fail.

Creation pix: We begin at the beginning as God created the heavens and the earth, all that is, God created.

Then very quickly, at least as God tells us through the bible, what God created good, quickly turn away from good in what we call the fall.

Fall pix: Adam and Eve lived in paradise, in fellowship with God but they weren't satisfied letting God be God. They wanted to be their own god; they wanted to decide their own destiny. **Pix**

God wasn't satisfied with the way things were going but won't abandon his creation.

Noah's ark pix: So he tried to cleanse his creation through the flood, starting over with Noah and his family. Maybe this where we get the idea for a New Year's resolution. Noah and his family would try to do better.

Well that didn't go so well, so God came up with another idea. A new plan, a new covenant, we call it the old testament. God choose those we called in Confirmation, people of the promise, Abraham and Sarah.

Pix: God told them to start over, take a new fresh start, leave your homeland and family. Trust me God said to this old couple, I promise to make you a great nation, I will give you a promised land and most of all I will always be with you.

The promised passed on to Abraham and Sarah's son Isaac and Rebecca, then to Jacob and Rachel.

Pix: Jacob had 12 sons from his wives Rachel, Lea and their concubines.

Pix: After wrestling with an angel and having his name changed to Israel, these 12 sons Jacob became the 12 tribes of Israel.

Though God was faithful these people of the promise they were not. For example 10 of Jacob's sons sold their own brother daddy's favorite into slavery. A terrible thing, but God who is faithful turned lemons into lemon aide.

Pix: Joseph had one bad thing after another happen to him but God continued to bless him. God raised him to power in Egypt just in time to save his family from the famine. Moving them to Eygpt.

Egypt saved them from starvation but in time it turned out to enslave them. Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery and in time their whole family became enslaved.

But God heard their cries for God is faithful. **Pix:** God used Moses to lead them out of slavery and through the wilderness for 40 years before they were ready to enter into the land God promised their ancestors Abraham and Sarah.

But in the land of promise were other people. So God raised up

military leaders called judges to conquer the land. Pix: The Judges not only fought for and with the people but they also struggled to keep them faithful to God.

But the people were not happy with the Judges, they wanted Kings just like the other nations had, though God was their King.

Finally God gave them a King, The first Saul, who failed. Pix: Then came David who united them, though he made his mistakes. Pix: And then Solomon David's son, who made Israel rich and famous but failed he to remain faithful.

After three kings the kingdom split. 10 tribes to make Israel, 2 tribes to made Judah.

God sent prophets to guide the kings and the people back to God. Israel fell to Assyria in 721 bc, then Judah to Babylon in 567 bc and are deported.

In 539 bc under the Persian Cyrus the Jews are allowed to go back to Jerusalem. Many came back and lived under foreign rule.

Through out history God's people were blessed, then fell away from God, suffer the consequences, cried out to God, God heard their cry and blessed them. Not out of their goodness or righteous but out of God's.

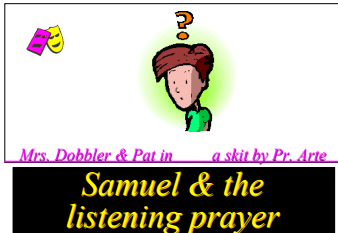
Finally God decides after Tribes, Judges, Kings and prophets to come down to earth as Jesus.

So if you make your resolutions I hope God blesses them. I hope they do you good. But remember, I don't want to discourage you but if things don't go as you wish, remember you are the beloved of a faithful God.

Remember: Our hope is in the one who from the beginning of time has been working to show you that you are loved.

Resolve to trust God.
Happy New Year.

Sermon



Samuel was asleep when God called him. God had a job for him. He wanted him to be a prophet. God wanted him to be his mouth piece, his spokesmen to his people.



In the skit, God was calling Pat to work with computers or with mathematics probably working with people. Unlike our bible reading God wasn't calling Samuel, Samuel or even Pat, Pat. In the skit God was using other people to make God's call heard.

We are in the church season of Epiphany. An epiphany can be defined as an eye opening experience. Or ear opening experience. During this season we will be reading bible readings that show epiphanies, eye opening experiences into the kingdom of God. Some epiphanies are huge mountain top experiences. The transfiguration for example was a mountain top epiphany. Some epiphanies most epiphanies are very subtle.

I believe that God calls every one of us to many things. It could be a profession, a particular job, and relationships. God calls people to make a difference in this world. Sometimes God calls us to make a difference in one other person's life. It could be what we think is a very little thing. That little thing can parlay into something huge.

What is God calling you to? Are you looking? Are you listening?

In the movie Rush hour Jackie Chan plays the part of a police officer from China who comes the United States to work with Chris Tucker an African American police officer. As you can imagine they have a communicate problem; a different language, a different culture. A one point Chris Tucker gets really frustrated with Jackie Chan and yells "Do you understand the words that are coming out of my mouth"?

It's funny how we think that people from another country, who speak another language will understand us better if we raise our voice.

This made me wonder. God is probably trying to talk to us all the time. I wonder if God ever wants to scream at us: "Do you understand the words that are coming out of my mouth"?



God has many opportunities for you for all of us. Some opportunities are right here with St. Ansgar's. Some are at work, at home, at school. They can be in places in situations we just haven't been looking. Or it could be in when we just haven't been listening. Open yourself to God's calling. Open your eyes and ears to God's plans. Let's try Samuel's prayer, Speak Lord your servant is listening.