

Off lection. Designed for a contemplative segment in a New Years Eve service	A New Years Reset (A 30 minute reflection time inserted at 10:00 into the New Year's Eve party) by Tim Isbell	Preached 12/31/02
--	---	----------------------

Thesis: The Lord hears our confession and sets us free to begin fresh in the new year.

Confession

Give a small rock to each person and have a bucket or some sort of container in the center or front of the room for people to put it in later.

Max Lucado's story

Confession does for the soul what preparing the land does for the field. Before the farmer sows the seed, he works the acreage, removing the rocks and pulling the stumps. He knows that seed grows better if the land is prepared. Confession is the act of inviting God to walk the acreage of our hearts. "There is a rock of greed over here, Father; I can't budge it. And that tree of guilt near the fence? Its roots are long and deep. And may I show you some dry soil, too crusty for seed?" God's seed grows better if the soil of the heart is cleared.

Read from Psalm 139

1 O LORD, you have examined my heart and know everything about me.

2 You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my every thought when far away.

...

7 I can never escape from your spirit!

...

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts.

24 Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.

Ritual of attaching our confession to the rock

Brennan Manning story

A few years ago, rumors spread that a certain Catholic woman was having visions of Jesus. The archbishop decided to check her out.

'Is it true, ma'am, that you have visions of Jesus?' asked the Bishop.

'Yes,' the woman replied.

'Well, the next time you have a vision, I want you to ask Jesus to tell you the sins that I confessed in my last confession. Please call me if anything happens.'

Ten days later the woman notified the Bishop of a recent apparition.

Within the hour the Bishop arrived. 'What did Jesus say?' he asked.

She took his hand and gazed deep into his eyes. 'Bishop,' she said, 'these are his exact words: I CAN'T REMEMBER. '

Read from Psalm 103

10 He has not punished us for all our sins, nor does he deal with us as we deserve.

11 For his unfailing love toward those who fear him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth.

12 He has removed our rebellious acts as far away from us as the east is from the west.

Read Isaiah 43

25 "I--yes, I alone--am the one who blots out your sins for my own sake and will never think of them again.

Read from Micah 7

18 Where is another God like you, who pardons the sins of the survivors among his people? You cannot stay angry with your people forever, because you delight in showing mercy. 19 Once again you will have compassion on us. You will trample our sins under your feet and throw them into the depths of the ocean! 20 You will show us your faithfulness and unfailing love as you promised with an oath to our ancestors Abraham and Jacob long ago.

Invite people to put their rock into the container

Moving forward into the New Year

Jimmy Carter story

In 1966, I ran for governor of Georgia and lost to avowed segregationist Lester Maddox. [My sister] Ruth drove to Plains and listened while I deplored the poor judgment and racist tendencies of my fellow Georgians and vented my anger toward God. Then Ruth quoted James 1:2.

I said, "Ruth, my political life is over! It's not my goal just to grow peanuts, sell fertilizer, gin cotton, and build up a bank account. God has rejected me through the people's vote."

Ruth replied, "Jimmy, you have to believe that out of this defeat can come a greater life."

I responded bitterly, "There is no way I can build on such an embarrassing defeat."

Patiently, Ruth explained what James was saying. When we face trials with courage, we learn to endure and pray for wisdom. Wisdom leads us to depend on things made available to all through God's love.

Christ gives us the courage to take a chance on something new. Ruth advised me to do something totally unrelated to my business or politics. Shortly afterward I was asked by the Baptist Brotherhood to go as a lay witness on a mission in Pennsylvania. I did, and it changed my life.

Read from James 1

2 Dear brothers and sisters, whenever trouble comes your way, let it be an opportunity for joy. 3 For when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. 4 So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be strong in character and ready for anything.

5 If you need wisdom--if you want to know what God wants you to do--ask him, and he will gladly tell you. He will not resent your asking.

James 1:2-5 (NLT)

Let's face the new year like that: facing trials with courage, enduring and praying for wisdom, and inviting God to do fresh things in our lives this year.

Benediction

24-26 'May the Lord bless and protect you; may the Lord's face radiate with joy because of you; may he be gracious to you, show you his favor, and give you his peace.'

Num 6:24 (Living)