

CREATED GAY

God's New Year Resolution

by Gary Simpson

Year A Revised Common Lectionary
5th Sunday in Lent
Year B Revised Common Lectionary
Pentecost

Today, we will look at three texts that give us insights that are important to consider, as we start a new year.

The New Testament passage is from Luke, Chapter 6. The chapter discusses the Sabbath, the choosing of the twelve and the beatitudes.(1) **Luke 6:9** (CEV) **Then Jesus asked, "On the Sabbath should we do good deeds or evil deeds? Should we save someone's life or destroy it?"**

The Sabbath is not a selfish gift from a vindictive God. The Sabbath gives; it does not take. The Sabbath gives life, and is intended for good. From this passage, we can understand that the importance of the Sabbath is not just our own personal rest, but is helping others, so they too are able to be doubly blessed on the Sabbath. The good news is that the Sabbath hours are not the only time we can sanctify or set apart ourselves for the Lord and for humanity. We can set aside other periods of time too. As we enter into the new year, a godly resolution we can have is to create Sabbath hours during each week of the year when we can be blessed and be a blessing.

Life in general is not always as nurturing and affirming for queer people as it could be. Because we are not affirmed and nurtured as much as we need, times through the week, not just on Sabbath, need to be created so we can feel blessed. When we create Sabbath hours through each week of the year, we are able to nurture, affirm and pamper our hearts, while we nurture, affirm and pamper others' hearts.

Genesis 45:4 - 5 (CEV) **Joseph told them to come closer to him, and when they did, he said: Yes, I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt. 5 Don't worry or blame yourselves for what you did. God is the one who sent me ahead of you to save lives.**

Rabbi Harvey Fields identifies four major themes in the chapters surrounding this text. The themes are:

- Importance of working for justice.

- Importance of reconciliation.
- Fearing strangers.
- Justice and economic planning.(2)

The verses we read are about reconciliation. Considerable time passed between the time Joseph's brothers sold Joseph into slavery and the time he reconciled with his brothers. During that time, the hated brother turns into the savior of the family.

Queer Christians may feel sold into slavery. They were sold into slavery by those who turned being straight into a legalistic requirement to enter the Kingdom of heaven. Just as Joseph forgave his brothers, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and trans-identified people can forgive their Christian brothers and sisters who sold them into slavery - getting to the place where you can forgive and can enjoy a reconciled relationship with those who sold you into slavery.

This passage helps us understand that time is about forgiveness and reconciliation. A new year gives us time. That time can be used for reconciliation. The Lord gives us time, so we can be reconciled to Him, to be reconciled to our own hearts, and to each other. We need time to comprehend the grace of God, a god who loves so much that sexual orientation and gender identification do not slow down God's love for a single second. When we understand God's love, we realize we are reconciled and we are able to celebrate our reconciliation. We start to be more reconciled to our own hearts. We stop hating ourselves for who we are and start to enjoy being the people God wants us to be. Two godly resolutions for the new year are to share the reconciliation God made even more fully with our own hearts, and be more reconciled to others, including those who hurt us.

Ezekiel 37:4-8 He then told me to say: Dry bones, listen to what the LORD is saying to you, 5 "I, the LORD God, will put breath in you, and once again you will live. 6 I will wrap you with muscles and skin and breathe life into you. Then you will know that I am the LORD." 7 I did what the LORD said, but before I finished speaking, I heard a rattling noise. The bones were coming together! 8 I saw muscles and skin cover the bones, but they had no life in them.

Chapter 36 has a section on the restoration of Israel.(3) Then there is the graphic story of the dead bones coming to life and the section on the restoration in Ezekiel Chapter 37. Chapter 37 of Ezekiel is about the vision of the dry bones and the restoration of Israel.(4) The section concentrates on the restoration of Israel.(5)

The promise of the restoration of Israel comes with an illustration of the Lord's power. In the vision, the God who spoke the world into being puts muscles and skin back on a valley of old, dried out bones and then gives back life.

You might be wondering what on earth this has to do with a New Year's theme in the passages. At first glance, there seems to be no relation to New Year's.

At New Year's, there is a tendency for some people to be discouraged. All of their hopes that life would change, that neurotic or psychotic or just plain jerk loved ones would change during the holidays. And they did not do that! One may look back at all of the failures of one's life, the many resolutions to change, to do things differently and feel overwhelmed by failure. The numerous times when you resolved to do better to be better and failed may have left you consumed by guilt.

To those who are broken by pain, by the circumstances of life, Ezekiel's dream brings hope. Brokenness will end. God's New Year's resolution is to give you a life that is quantitatively and qualitatively different. And God keeps His resolutions!

Ezekiel 37:23 They will no longer worship idols and do things that make them unacceptable to me. I will wash away their sin and make them clean, and I will protect them from everything that makes them unclean. They will be my people, and I will be their God.

Gay, bisexual, lesbian, asexual and trans people may worship the idol of straightness. God washes away the debris and dirt that form of idol worship leaves in one's heart.

How does this all happen? This happens because Jesus did what we cannot do. He lived the acceptable life and gives you the credit for that perfect life. His blood washes away your sin. In the heavenly, we will no longer worship idols and we will be protected from all that might make us unclean again. And that is all yours today. Even the price is right - it's free.



Notes

(1) Merrill F. Unger. Unger's Bible Handbook. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1967), 523.

(2) Harvey J. Fields. A Torah Commentary for Our Times. (New York: UAHC Press, 1990), 110.

(3) Matthew Henry. Matthew Henry's Bible Commentary. (Electronic book. e-Sword. Ver. 6.5.0 by Rick Meyers. Leiper's Fork, TN: 2002).

(4) Unger, 378.

(5) Unger, 378.

