

CRIBB<S>NOTE - December 27, 2009

The New Year signals a time of renewal, a chance to start fresh, and a moment for a new beginning. We can reflect on the past twelve months. We can regret our mistakes and wish for other outcomes. But, we can also envision something altogether new and different. The New Year means we don't have to carry over the past. We are liberated. It is a new day that opens the way for us to do what we may have never done before.

Joshua, the young apostle of Moses, stood before his people and declared, "As for me and my house, we will serve God." That is an emphatic statement without ambiguity. He clearly expressed the priority and desire of his heart. He said no matter what others do or think, God is first and worthy of praise. That is an incredible resolution.

The start of a new year brings many temptations. We may be tempted to make big promises and announce "New Year's resolutions." We may have the best intentions to do something to improve our health, lose weight, make more money, or spend more time with our children. There are so many things that require our attention. We may resolve to adjust our lives to accommodate many of the demands pressed on us.

Whatever we decide is the most the important item that deserves our utmost care I truly like the clarity of Joshua, "We will serve God." There is no better choice.

The determination to serve God begins the process of properly ordering our lives. Instead of chasing the elusive buck to increase our bank accounts, placing God above everything allows us to realize the true value of life. We pause in the midst of our pursuit. We take time to experience the glorious array of Creation. We discover time to share with loved ones, neighbors, and friends.

Putting God first is a great beginning to improve the quality of life. It makes us more aware of God's love for us. Even when challenges assault our tranquility, there is a more profound peace that envelops our inner-being. It is almost inexplicable but no less real and reassuring. The countenance on our face reflects a calm that is not easily dismissed. Others notice a difference in us upon approach. There is no need to fret over losses; instead, a more relaxed response is automated and we go forward with a sense of ease and greater awareness.

Our decision to serve God changes every aspect of life. We take seriously our actions that can break human ties and damage relationships with other people. We offer apologies for our missteps and we become available to receive expressions from people who have their own need to re-build and repair broken bonds. We can renew what were once lost friendships. We begin anew. It is God's love for us that makes it possible to see ourselves as vessels of peace and good will. And, we recognize the potential in others to promote understanding. There is hope for the future.

This New Year is an excellent time to repent. That may seem like an arcane term, but it provides a specific intentionality to not repeat our past mistakes. We can dedicate ourselves to clean up the air, purify our water supply, protect the Earth, and honor the sacredness of human life. We can work to limit systems that produce war and destruction. We can take time to look after our neighbors and ensure the welfare of the most vulnerable and neediest among us. We don't have to do things the same old way. We can expand our vision and increase our efforts to touch the lives of children and preserve the lives of the elderly.

It begins with an acknowledgement that God cares about every human being and loves us without condition. All that is asked of us is to care and love each other. This New Year we can show mercy and extend forgiveness. We can believe in the possibility of goodness, justice for all, and kindness. That is a New Year's resolution worth working toward and one that we all can celebrate.