

New Year

Brynmawr Family Church Sermon
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 27th Dec 2009

Intro-

- Cycles are a God-ordained part of our lives- God invented the day, week, month and year all of which are cycles. We cannot go against God's cycles for too long before it negatively affects us.- e.g. We function best when we sleep each night rather than once a week; when we have a day off a week rather than work 4 weeks without a day off; when we go to the beach to sunbathe in July rather than December. Coming to the end of a cycle we commonly reflect on what has been and what is about to come. It might be pondering the day in bed, reflecting with your spouse or with the Lord; or reaching the end of your week and breathing a sigh of relief, or totting up totals on monthly accounts or thinking about the highlights of a year and praying and planning for the next. Time when we reflect on what has been and maybe what we can do differently.
- God knows that we become more pensive at the start of our year so for the Israelites He gave something very important for them to remember at the start of each year. Imagine that 4 months into our year something so significant happened in our Nation that the Prime Minister said it was going to be marked in a special way and from now on the year would start, not in January, but in April to mark the occasion. That is exactly what happened to the Israelites and we will see today it's significance for us as we also start a new year.

Read Exodus 12:1-14

The Passover was so important that God commanded that the Israelites start their year with it

- What is literal in the Old Testament law is often a shadow of the reality in the New Testament (covenant)- Christ=our passover-1Cor 5:7-8. What this says to us today is that the cross is so important to us it must be the foundation of our lives. Is it?
- **'Household'** (v3)-God wants to save families+ be the centre of families. Pray for non-Christians. Sunday school, family altar. Intercessor for your family. Philipian jailer saved through Paul & Silas-Acts 16:31 'you and your household', v33 '..he and all his family were baptised'. Timothy was influenced by his family-first in his grandmother, Lois, and his mother, Eunice (2 Timothy 1:5)- people worry about leaving a legacy- no matter what you do- leave a legacy of faith to your kids. As He did with Abraham, the Lord wants every father to "command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord" (Genesis 18:19). Satan wants to wreck homes- we need God's help -'unless the Lord builds the house' -Ps 127:1. It was mealtime at the annual family reunion and, this year, the entire family was present for the traditional time of fellowship, reminiscing ... and food. Little did they know that they were in store for one of the most moving and memorable moments in their lives. Their father stood awkwardly at the head of the table, cleared his throat and asked for their attention. "You know," he began, "I have always said there are two things I will not discuss - religion and politics. And, about religion, I have always said that it is a personal matter. Well, I still believe that religion is personal. But lately I have come to understand that it was never meant to be private. "On this sheet of paper," he continued, "I have written the testimony of my faith in Christ. I will admit that, until recently, I didn't have a testimony. That's why I didn't want to discuss it. But, a few days ago, all that changed and I want you to know about it. I'm a little new at this, so if you don't mind, I'd just like to read this to you." A hush fell over the room as the father humbly read his testimony to his family. The father stumbled on through the brief statement of his faith in Christ. When he looked up he was amazed at what was happening. His sons had turned their faces toward the wall to hide the tears that were welling up in their eyes. His wife and daughters dabbed the tears that were now flowing down their cheeks. His grandchildren were looking curiously at their parents to determine just what was happening. Little did that father know that he was setting in motion a series of events that would ultimately see all his family members come to Christ. This would be his legacy of

faith that would be passed down for generations to come. And little did the family or the father know that they would all gather again only a few weeks later. And this time it would be at a graveside where his earthly remains would be deposited, along with the clear assurance that he was with God. Have you shared your faith with your family? On more than one occasion, grief-stricken children have stood at the casket of a father asking, "Pastor, do you believe my dad will be in heaven?" The pastor, of course, will try to comfort them, but he cannot give them the assurance they so desperately need. After all, the Scripture clearly states that one of the evidences of genuine salvation is a willingness to testify to that fact. The psalmist exclaimed, "... let the redeemed of the Lord say so" (Psalm 107:2). Has your family heard your testimony of faith in Christ? In Africa they say, "When an old man dies, library is burned." One day it will be impossible for your friends and family members to access all that is stored up in the library of your heart. That is why it is imperative for you to share with them now the simple story of your conversion. A legacy of faith in Christ is the most important thing you can leave with them. So, tell them "your story." And, while you're at it, ask them about theirs.

- (v3)'10th of the month'- on this day the Jews were to assess the lamb for any blemish and then slaughter on 14th (v6). On 10th Jesus had triumphal entry into Jerusalem. He was tested by the Pharisees and Sadducees and Herodians and scribes+ pilate but they could find no blemish in Him- Jesus is our perfect righteousness for this coming year. Jews had their days start at sundown (see Gen 1- 'there was evening and morning the first day'), so a day starts with the evening and continues until the sun goes down the next day. On the evening of the 14th Jesus enjoyed His last passover meal with His disciples and on the next morning (of the 14th still) at 9am He fulfilled the passover by dying on the cross at the exact time the lamb was to be offered in the temple. **Grace**, not works- receive forgiveness & perfect righteousness. Unleavened bread- no sin. Prayer- shows a reliance on God rather than ourselves. Don Richardson, wrote about the difficulty missionaries had in communicating the good news of Jesus Christ to the Chinese people. But one day, there was a breakthrough. Writing about a missionary, said, "He was studying a particular Chinese ideograph, the one which means "righteous." He noticed that it contained an upper and lower part. The upper part was simply the Chinese symbol for a "Lamb." Directly under was simply a second symbol, the first person pronoun, "I" or "me." "Suddenly, the missionary discerned an amazingly well-coded message hidden within the ideograph: "I under the lamb am righteous!" "This startled the Chinese people. They never noticed it, but once the missionary pointed this out, they saw it clearly. They asked, "Which lamb must we be under to be righteous?"[The missionary] replied with John 1:29, where John the Baptist points to Jesus and says, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" "I under the Lamb of God am righteous."
- Starting year on victory note- recounting God's goodness to us in delivering from slavery to sin=sure & certain hope for the future. Psalm 103:1-5 'Bless the Lord O my soul...and forget not all His benefits'- recount the good- ultimately we are in a win-win situation. Thankfulness for the cross.

Read Ex 40:1-2, 16-17, 34-38

- A year later on the first day of the year the tabernacle was set up according to God's plan. This speaks to us about worship being at the start of our year. Is your lifestyle/household one of worship? Tommy Tenney relates how God spoke to him and said, "You know, Tommy, your favorite worship services and MY favorite services are not the same. You leave your services full and satisfied, but when you leave, I'm still hungry." Tenney writes, "God whispered this to me during a life-changing Sunday morning service. It was a divine encounter that forever imprinted itself with indelible ink on the pages of my memory." He continues, "There were tears in my eyes when I whispered to my wife, 'I don't think I've ever been this close to Him before.' I wish I knew then what I have discerned since - that God will leave our meetings full and satisfied only when we begin to leave them feeling hungrier for Him than when we first came."
- As Israel was obedient in seeing God's worship as primary so they were blessed by His **manifest presence**. The cloud came in response to their obedience in building the tabernacle. What things has God put on your heart to do this year that still need doing? A tent was prepared as a dwelling place for God- but you are a dwelling for God. Martin Luther said, "If anyone knocks at the door of my breast and says, 'Who lives there?' my answer is, 'Jesus Christ lives here, not Martin Luther.'"
- **Guidance** comes to a heart that is devoted. The cloud led them from then on. Guidance this year will come to us as we truly seek His face. In May, 1844, the first message to be sent over the telegraph, dispatched by Morse himself between Washington and Baltimore, were the words: "What hath God wrought?" One day a friend of Samuel Morse, inventor of the telegraph, said to him, "Professor, when you were making your experiments, did you ever come to a place not knowing what to do next?" "More than once," Morse replied, "and whenever I could not see my way clearly, I knelt down and prayed

to God for light and understanding." Then Morse added: "When flattering honors came to me from American and Europe on account of my invention, I never felt I deserved them. I had made a valuable application of electricity, not because I was superior to another man, but solely because God, who meant it for mankind, must reveal it to someone, and was pleased to reveal it to me."

Resolutions

- Resolutions by Jonathan Edwards, puritan preacher: "Resolved: that all men should live for the glory of God. Resolved second: that whether others do or not, I will."
- Another Puritan, Matthew Henry, had great resolve, as well: "I do in the beginning of this New Year solemnly make a fresh surrender of myself, my whole self, body, soul, and spirit, to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, my Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, covenanting and promising, not in any strength of my own, for I am very weak, but in the strength of the grace of Jesus Christ, that I will endeavour this year to stand complete in the Will of God."
- In 1849 a twenty-year-old man wrote up the following resolutions: "I do promise, my God helping: "Firstly, that I will rise every morning sufficiently early (say twenty minutes before seven o'clock) to wash, dress, and have a few minutes, not less than five, in private prayer. "Secondly, that I will, as much as possible, avoid all that babbling and idle talk in which I have lately so sinfully indulged. "Thirdly, that I will endeavor in my conduct and deportment before the world and my fellow servants especially to conduct myself as a humble, meek and zealous follower of the bleeding Lamb, and, by serious conversation and warning, endeavor to lead them to think of their immortal souls. "Fourthly, that I will not read less than four chapters in God's word every day. "Fifthly, that I will strive to live closer to God, and to seek after holiness of heart, and leave providential events with God. "Sixthly, that I will read this over every day or at least twice a week. God help me, enable me to cultivate a spirit of self-denial and to yield myself a prisoner of love to the Redeemer of the world. Amen and Amen." He then added this postscript: "I feel my own weakness, and without God's help I shall not keep these resolution a day. The Lord have mercy on my guilty soul." His name? William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army.

Summary

- Cycles are from God and it is good to evaluate between cycles. The cross is to remain our foundation this year: God wants to touch families through it. He wants us to know His righteousness and walk in grace. He wants us to reflect on His victory for us.
- Worship is also to remain our foundation. We are the dwelling place of God. As we look to Him He will also guide us.
- Great champions of God made great resolutions by God's grace- what are ours for this year?

Song: *Jesus Christ I think upon your sacrifice*