

New Year's Resolutions

- OK, every minister does this on the first Sunday of every New Year, but...
...*what New Year's resolutions have you made?*
- have you kept them?
- Maybe a more interesting question is what New Year's resolutions should you have made?
- *ask your husband/wife/children/parents/friends!!*
- for me, "just coming" should mean what it says, not see you in 10 minutes!
- However we feel about resolutions, and whether we ever keep them or not, there is something of a human need for a fresh start.
 - fresh start - a new series - Mark's gospel
 - fresh start - a new year
 - fresh start - Church, Community and Change

Introducing Mark

- There are many different ways of telling a story:
 - newspaper; novel; police incident report; personal recollection;
- *For example, imagine as you came into church this morning you spotted a car outside with a smashed window:*
 - newspaper: Fintry, 4th January 2004: a Renault Laguna, owned by Colin Brough (35), minister of Mains of Fintry parish church, was vandalised outside the church today. Witnesses reported hearing the sound of smashing glass, but did not see the vandals. Anyone with more information is asked to contact Constable Lindsay Ellis at the Downfield Police Office....
 - police incident report: Location - outside Fintry Church, on Fintry Drive to west of junction with Fintry Road. Attended incident reported by residents to control room; witness XXXX of 999 Fintry Drive reports hearing sound of breaking glass at approx 1030am on Sunday 4th January, 2004. She came to her window, saw the broken car window, but saw no-one on street. Spoke to Mr Brough (4 Clive Street, Dundee) about the damage to the car - dark grey Renault Lagune, registration number M 572 GUS, missing badge from front bonnet. He reports hearing the window smash shortly after arriving for the church service at 1025am, and coming out to investigate. He knows of no reason why anyone would target his vehicle. There were two other vehicles parked in the bay next to Mr Brough's car at the time of the incident; neither of these was damaged....
 - novel: *It was a cold, brisk morning, at the start of a New Year.*
 - personal recollections: *what a hassle! Just getting ready for church, the kids were still getting their coats of when I heard the sound of smashing glass. Went out to investigate and found that some idiot had smashed the passenger window of the car. Someone phoned the police, so I had to give a statement, get someone to watch the car and them come in and do the service...!!!*
- Mark - *executive summary style!* Short, and to point!
 - he *sometimes misses out details* we know from the other gospel accounts; (eg *the nature of the temptations Jesus faced in today's passage*)
 - but as he does so he is always highlighting key features of Jesus' ministry that he considers particularly important for us to hear
 - *theme of hiddenness of Jesus identity...* yet healings and teaching pointing to his true identity!
 - *theme of reason for the Cross...* its centrality in way whole book constructed...
- And he sets his stall out clearly in these early verses:
 - *its all about Jesus*, who he is, how we react to him
 - *want to pick out three things Mark picks out in Jesus' first recorded words...*

Turn (v.15)

- Politicians (or anyone else!) very, very rarely admit they were wrong, that it was their fault and that they made a mistake!!
- There is something in us that hates admitting we are wrong, that we can't do something.
- But that repentance - turning - is starting point of our relationship with God.
 - turning away from sin and towards God;
 - setting a direction for life - not a newly found perfection...

Follow (v.17)

- I remember seeing Kenneth Branagh doing a drama a couple of years back about Ernest Shackleton...
- At heart of the drama of the story is Shackleton's leadership:
 - how did he hold together that group of explorers and adventurers and lead them to safety after their ship was crushed in the ice, and they had to make do on the ice, and then sail in a small, semi-open boat to South Georgia across the Antarctic Ocean?
 - whatever it was, people followed, trusted, and he came through without losing a single man.
- Turn - and follow me is what Jesus said.
- Relationship with him:
 - time reading Scripture;
 - time praying;
 - time talking about him with others;
 - time putting into practise his call on our lives - following him.
- Its about discipleship, not just conversion; (Molly Dow; knowing Jesus; holy living)

Fish (v.17)

- There is substantial difference between school/college made up projects ("make work", even if to learn) and real life, where what you are doing actually matters.
 - I remember being involved in organising a summer programme for students at the place where I worked before I entered the ministry;
 - linking a student who would come and work for us for the summer, with someone who had something he or she was interested in doing but didn't have the time to tackle;
 - the fact that what this student was doing made a real difference to the person they were working with, made a tangible difference, transformed the attitude of the students...
- We are not just called to turn and follow - we are also given a purpose, a task, and one that makes a real difference:
 - we are called to be fishers of men;
 - to draw men and women to God, to introduce them to the same Saviour we have come to know as we have repented, come to follow in response to His call.
- Not just make work, not just keeping the institution of the church alive for another decade or century...
 - rather bringing life to souls who would otherwise face a lost eternity!
- Notice:
 - fishers - went and got fish;
 - the great commission: "Go and make disciples..." - GO and DISCIPLES
- Not "come to us" but "go to them":
 - in every relationship we have with those around us;
 - in every aspect of our congregational life...

Conclusion

- Let us embark into this New Year; thinking and praying towards the next stage in our life as a congregation of God's people in this place:
 - *and let us be those who...*
 - **turn** - **repent**, at heart of our faith;
 - **follow** - follow **Jesus**, not our own masters anymore; on-going, not only as become a Christian;
 - **fish** - for others, not ourselves; **go to them, not them come to us...**