

January 2021

Beloved:

I'm not much of a New Year's Eve enthusiast. Christmas is definitely more my jam. New Year's Eve always seems like a holiday for extroverts, the tribe that needs noise and crowds and excitement. My tribe tends to go for a few quiet friends, a good book, or jammies in front of the fire. I used to worry that my life was a bit too boring, but I guess I'm old enough not to worry about that kind of thing anymore. Plus, I know I am not the only member of this tribe.



This doesn't mean that I don't acknowledge the liminality that is the ending of one year and the beginning of another. On the first day of the year, there is one thing that I nearly always do—I begin a new journal. Sometimes it works out that I am nearly finished with whatever journal I have been writing in, and other years I just leave one journal with pages yet to be filled, and start fresh anyway.

I love beginning the new year with a fresh blank page. So much possibility. The first thing I do with the blank page, however, is to look back over the previous months. What have I thought and felt about life, about faith, about work, about my relationships? What have I learned? What stands out in my memory? What areas of life do I need to re-evaluate? How are things with my soul? Where is God leading? What does it mean to belong to God?

In Methodism, an early tradition at the turning of the year was the Covenant Service. It wasn't original to John Wesley, but he used it as a teaching tool. Every year the community was given the opportunity to ask some questions, to re-commit heart, mind and body to being who we believe God is calling us to be. There is an entire worship liturgy that goes with this service, but the most important part of it, at least for me, are these words near the end:

I am no longer my own, but thine.
Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee,
Exalted for thee or brought low for thee.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal.
And now, O Glorious and blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
Thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on earth,
Let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

It has been quite a year, dear friends. When I started writing this afternoon, I began with a list of life events, turning points, obstacles, anxieties, challenges—and the list was long. I know yours is as well. The turning of the calendar will not mean the sudden disappearance of those things which have tested us. But it does give us the chance to take a beat. To listen for God's voice. To remember who and whose we are.

You are God's beloved. You are my friend. Together we walk this road, no matter what lies ahead. Blessings and peace on this turning of year. Things are changing. God is present. All shall be well.

Blessings, Pastor Nancy