

Sunday Service Sermons

03 January 2021

An Imperative Regarding the Negative and The Positive

Can I ask the age old question: Is your cup half full or half empty?

I like to be a positive person.

God only operates in the positive so when we are negative we are working for the other side, not good!

But I am afraid that my cup is half empty and I anticipate when it is completely empty.

I am doing better than my father's mother and my father in regards to having a nervous digestive system.

No ulcers since college when I decided that I would do my best and be able to say, well that is my best.

I do think the best of people.

And I try to see the good in any situation.

Especially since things work out for the good for those who are living for and by the aid of Father God.

I am a positive person.

I am positively good or positively bad.

Do you observe a good movie?

I live it with the people in it.

After living the movie Witness, which takes place among the Amish, I wanted to go live with them.

But I knew from experience that it was not as depicted in the movie.

Northern Indiana has a large Amish population.

Many know little about Jesus, just what they are not allowed to do.

Now that is a religion based on the negative.

And that is not good.

So; are you positive about 2021?

It is coming and it will have many opportunities for ministry to others and service to our Lord.

In order that we do a good job for God in 2021 let us take some time to look at some of the great imperatives found in the writings of Paul as he wrote to the churches that were dear to his heart.

Paul shared a great imperative with the church at Rome that can help us to have a better year.

It requires that we give careful attention to the forces at work that affect our lives both in the negative and in the positive.

The negative of it is to not be contaminated by the world in which we live.

The positive of it calls upon us to experience an inward spiritual transformation that produces a radical change in our conduct in the midst of this compromising environment in which we live.

The bold challenge to full commitment. Rom. 12:1

Paul issues a challenge to all disciples of Jesus to present their bodies as a living sacrifice in service to God and others.

The Phillips translation puts it this way, "With eyes wide open to the mercies of God, I beg you, my brothers, as an act of intelligent worship, to give him your bodies, as a living sacrifice, consecrated to him and acceptable by him."

Wow, that is a very good way to put it.

That is a passage that I translated from the Greek in Seminary.

And that gets to the heart of the matter.

You do know that God always gets to the heart of the matter, right?

That is why you cannot fool God, he knows your heart.

What Paul is saying here is pivotal in his thinking.

Before that passage is doctrine and what follows is the practical application of that doctrine.

The first portion of the letter deals with proper beliefs and the balance of the letter deals with the expression of these beliefs in the way we live.

An imperative regarding a great peril.

“Do not be conformed to this world.”

Or as the Phillips translation puts it, “Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold.”

As the redeemed children of God, having been made new creatures in Christ Jesus, we live in a world system that is under the dominion of the evil one.

The sinful world in which we live is not passive and unconcerned.

Evil is aggressive, and we must put forth effort to prevail against the squeezing, conforming power of the world system in which we live.

God calls us to be different.

We are to be dead to sin and alive to God.

Instead of responding affirmatively to temptations we are to respond as dead persons.

We must not permit either our evil nature within or the evil world about us to dominate us.

We are to conduct ourselves as beloved children of God, walking in the light rather than in darkness.

Paul told the Colossians to put to death that which was earthly and evil in their nature and in turn to put on the new nature and live as God’s chosen ones.

An imperative regarding an exciting possibility.

“Be transformed by the renewal of your mind.”

Paul uses a Greek word here with which people today are familiar.

It is the word metamorphosis, and it means to change the nature of.

Once a farmer raised a crop of cabbage but was unable to sell it.

The cabbage went to waste in the field, and many cabbages were eaten by worms.

Later the farmer’s son noticed small yellow butterflies in the field where the cabbage had been raised.

He learned that the worms had changed into butterflies.

The technical name for that change is metamorphosis.

Paul was urging his readers to experience a remarkable transformation that is possible by a renewal of the mind that comes when one is born again and filled with the Holy Spirit.

It is the work of the Holy Spirit using the Scriptures and a responsive heart to bring about inward mental and spiritual transformation that is manifested outwardly in a change in one’s conduct.

If you would change your conduct, you must change your creed.

If you would change your behavior, you must first of all change your beliefs.

If you would become truly Christian in your conduct, you must become Christ-like in your thinking.

For only by a revolutionary change in your thoughts can you experience a revolutionary change in your conduct.

The call to repentance is in reality a call to a complete change in one’s thought patterns and decision-making process with reference to God, to sin, to self, to things, and to others.

How much change took place in your thinking about God, yourself, others, and things during the past year?

Paul challenged the Philippian Christians to have the mind of Christ.

Only as we let the Holy Spirit change our thinking and cause us to think like Christ can we experience the transformation that needs to take place in our lives.

The glorious end result of refusing to be conformed to the world and of experiencing inward mental

and spiritual transformation is to prove in our own experience that the will of God is good and acceptable and perfect.

You can never really know that God's will is best for you, and for others, until you make this complete commitment of yourself to God's will as he reveals it to you.

So with eyes wide open to the mercies of God present yourself to him.

Offer yourself, your very existence, to God in order that He make you what he wants you to be through the Holy Spirit living in you.

This will make for one awesome year!

God guarantees it in Christ Jesus.