

January 20, 2012

“Echoes of the Heart”

Reflections on Life and Community Living

Believe in yourself! The thing I like most about New Years is the symbolism of *new beginnings*. The old year is gone; the new year is upon us. It’s a time to look up and look forward.

Check it out, friends: we can’t do anything about last year or any of the clutter or sadness of yesterday. But we *can* hold on to the hope and promise of the new year that is before us. A critical element in this is *self-belief*. When we believe in ourselves and open ourselves to the best that is in us, the sky is the limit to what we can achieve.

Jack Kemp was a professional football player who went on to become a United States congressman. He once told the story of how his college football coach called him into his office and said,

Jack, each year there is one player on our team that I keep an eye on. Just one. I’m going to tell you who that player is, but you must not tell anyone else. This year, that player is Jack Kemp. If you live up to your potential, you have what it takes to achieve greatness.

Upon hearing this, understandably, Jack became more motivated than ever. At every opportunity, he was eager to please his coach. Indeed, he became so determined that he would have run through a brick wall if that’s what it took to become the finest football player possible.

Interestingly, later, Jack learned that his coach had called each player on the team into his office for a similar conversation. As it turned out, this motivational strategy managed to tap the potential, not only of Jack Kemp, but of the entire team and they went on to have an outstanding season.

The point of this story, of course, is the important role that self-belief and a sense of self-purpose play in our lives.

Starting over. Sometimes, what is needed in our lives is a chance to say: *Enough already! Time to start over.*

Symbolically, New Years *is* such a time. People of faith *must* believe in new beginnings. There are times when the best thing we can do is to turn away from whatever happened last week and start afresh. Again, we can’t fix the past; we *can* reshape the future. We do it by the good choices we make today and beyond.

At the heart of our Christian faith (and this is true for any of the world religions) is the belief that *we can live again*. The saving work of God in the world is about giving life—

and therein, hope—to any situation. God takes every thing that happens in our lives and does what God can to use it for good. God does this both *in us* and *through* us, as well as through the unfolding of the creative order.

Still, we are key players in God's redemptive work. Believing in ourselves, therefore, and having a sense of self-purpose and self-confidence, plays a critical role in the realization of God's purposes.

Self-belief and hope. Self-belief also relates to hope. No matter what, as human beings, we *must* be a people of hope. We must believe that things can get better—that people can change, that we can change. We must believe that tomorrow can be a better day.

For hope to be alive in our lives, we have to look for it—in every person and in every life-situation. This isn't always easy because life can be hard and people can be difficult.

People with self-belief look for the positive in life. They embody a sense of hope about the future. For them, the glass is always half-full, never half-empty. In every situation, with all people, they look on the bright side and for the best that can emerge. What is important to understand in this is that—everyday—this is a choice we make. We choose our attitude.

When we are alive to hope in our lives, it affects everything—the way we see, the way we hear, the way we feel, as well as our level of confidence and self-esteem. The truth is, self-belief makes everything better.

Again, it is a New Year—time to bid adieu to the year that was and to open ourselves, with hope and promise, to the exciting possibilities of the year that is upon us.