

“You gotta start somewhere”

January 8, 2006

Text: Genesis 1:15, Mark 1:14-20

I.

Well, the New Year is upon us ... many of us have made well-crafted resolutions for the year ahead—plans for change and personal improvement that will bring some combination of happiness and meaning into our lives ...

The New Year—always—gives us the impetus and the moral challenge to start over ... to begin afresh, with no remnants of yesterday, of our *old self*, holding us back. As Nancy said last Sunday in her message: *it’s a new year, a new day, a new beginning.*

But, still, as is always the case: **you gotta start somewhere.**

A man named George was reflecting on the good feeling of getting an early start on things: *There’s nothing like getting up at 6:00 in the morning, he said, going for a run around the park, and then taking a brisk shower before breakfast. Nothing beats it,* he added.

Curious about this, his friend Bob asked him, *That sounds great, George. How long have you been doing that?*

I start tomorrow, was George’s reply.

We can all relate, can’t we?? We all have plans, grandiose visions, lofty expectations of changes we’re going to make in our lives ... of things we want to do and become in the year ahead. But the key—always—is to get started.

II.

I often wonder how Jesus got started in his mission. What thoughts were in his mind that motivated him, for the first time, to initiate his ministry? To go out, that first day, and begin to live out (which means, to take action) what he felt God was calling him to do.

At some point, on some day, he had to start out. He had to get up, go out into the community that was his world and jump in ... and attempt to make things happen.

You gotta start somewhere!

According to the gospels stories, Jesus started out by calling the disciples through his *the time is fulfilled* proclamation.

*The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God has come near;
repent and believe the good news.*

As these words soon built up in him, he was emboldened to seek the recruitment of some followers. Walking along the Sea of Galilee, he sees Peter and his brother, Andrew, and he speaks out to them:

Follow me and I will make you fish for people.

And soon he recruits James and John as well. We have no background on these pivotal events that launched his ministry. We don't know if he was anxious and nervous ... if he was somewhat shy. We don't know what his mood was or his energy level, or anything about the contributing elements of this event.

III.

We only know, as human beings, that getting started isn't always easy. How often do we reflect on the prospect of doing anything ...

- of getting a job interview ...
- going off to the gym the first time to work out ...
- getting to know another person ...
- learning a new sport ...
- taking that first art lesson ...
- enrolling in a class to upgrade our skills ... or whatever it is.

We wonder, *how will I get started ... how and when?*

Getting started is the key for me in just about anything. Writing an article or a sermon ... working out at the gym or in the pool at home ... some project at church, in Stewardship, or adult education, or some major event. Whatever it is ... getting started is the KEY.

1. The Bible says (in **Ecclesiastes**) that *for everything there is a season, a time for everything under the sun.*
2. But the Bible also says, through the voice of the Apostle Paul, that *today is the day to be saved.*

What's both interesting and compelling about the Bible is that it teaches us to be reflective, contemplative and accepting ... while at the same time *having a sense of urgency about things.*

In other words: see the big picture of LIFE, and be discerning ... about our lives. But realize, at the same time, that we don't have forever.

There comes a point when we have to act. We gotta do it ... sometime. We gotta get out there, face the music ... sometime.

We don't have forever! Always in life, ***we gotta start somewhere!***

IV.

If we think about our lives, getting started is the key.

- Taking the first step.
- Mentioning the idea, the observation or insight, for the first time.
- Getting it on the table, making it part of the conversation.

Telling ourselves, *we're going to DO IT*. Telling others about our plans so that it becomes even more real ... even more likely. *We don't want to say we're going to do something and then NOT do it.*

According to the biblical story, God's first words were, ***Let there be light!*** If we think about it, that's a powerful beginning ... a compelling start. How are you going to back off from that? *Let there be light!*

When there's light, there's also darkness; they come together; it's a package deal.

- And then God names them ...
- and right from the start, there's a certain ordering to things.
- This is all a story, of course. It's metaphor, symbolic language.

But it serves to remind us that getting started is part of a process that gives our lives shape and meaning. It leads, inexorably, to self-discovery ... as we grow and learn who we are in the process of living.

Once the process of creation begins, there's no holding it back. God can't just *not* follow through ... and soon the waters and the land are created, and then the vegetation and animal life ... and, finally, human beings.

But you gotta start somewhere.

It's the same with Jesus. Once he announces his proclamation: ***The Kingdom of God is at hand***, and starts calling his disciples ... there's no holding him back. He's on his way.

1. He's got a proclamation ... a vision ... a mission statement;
2. and he's starting to recruit his followers ... his mission staff ... his evangelism team ... those who are going to help him.

V.

No matter what our challenges are in life ... and often times, they can be many.

- Whether we're in rehab from surgery, from a stroke ...
- whether we're trying to make some fundamental changes in our relationships,
- be it with spouse, parents, children, whomever ... **we gotta start somewhere.**

And as the Bible reassures us, again and again, we're never alone.

In the gospel stories, Jesus warns the disciples of *tough times* ahead. This is after he's trained them and sent them out on their mission.

1. Jesus knows there are going to be failures and disappointments ... even persecutions.
2. As we learn throughout the Bible, *speaking truth to love* is tough work. It's a *tough sell*, to use the world's vernacular.

And so Jesus reassures the disciples, saying to them, *When they hand you over, don't worry about how you are going to defend yourselves ... about what you are going to say ... for the words will be given to you through the Spirit.*

In other words,

- when times are tough and stressful ...
- when we think we're at the end of our patience ...
- when doubt and anxiety are rising too powerfully in our spirit ... let us not forget:

God is with us. We're not alone. The Spirit will guide us and nurture us and give us the light and the reassurance we need to make it through.

VI.

But the **KEY** is to *give ourselves to the process*. Jump in ... get started. **We gotta start somewhere.** And once we get involved in whatever it is ... the process builds off itself.

The meaning of our lives comes in the process of our living ...

- of living out our commitments, our sense of life-purpose ...
- and this includes the *little things of life* as well as the big things.

But each day, we gotta jump in. **We gotta start somewhere** ... giving ourselves to the Spirit and to the everlastingness of God's presence in our midst.

A 98 year old man—a man of considerable inspiration and character—was asked by a televangelist one time how long he planned on living.

Smiling, he replied, *Oh I'm planning to live to one hundred.*

Wow, the televangelist exclaimed, **so how can I live to be 100?**

Very simple, the old man said, *anybody can live to be one hundred. All you have to do is live to be 99 and then be verrrry careful.*

All praise be unto God! Amen!