

## **The Place of Renewal**

### **Psalm 73**

#### **Introduction:**

- A. Time of the year when people are trying new things.
  - 1. Kids & toys
  - 2. New clothes
  - 3. New “technology”
  - 4. New resolutions
- B. People make resolutions to try to get life back on track.
  - 1. Morning trips to the gym
  - 2. Brisk walks at lunch
  - 3. Starting a new diet
  - 4. Watch less TV—read more
- C. Our culture provides so many ways to improve our lives it’s a wonder we’re not all blissfully happy and content!
  - 1. Visit the self-help section of the bookstore—instructions on how to solve almost any problem.
  - 2. Also many books in the world of church leadership.
  - 3. Yet we know we are not all happy and content.
- D. There’s something about a new year that pulls at us and awakens a desire to turn over a new leaf and start life over in fresh ways at all levels of our existence.
  - 1. Physical: get in shape, take better care of ourselves, change jobs, etc.
  - 2. Emotional: control temper, stop cursing
  - 3. Spiritual: prayer, attend church, read Bible
- E. The secret to all renewal is the spiritual life.
  - 1. Start there and all the other dimensions of life will fall into place.
  - 2. If we neglect the spiritual life, no amount of pushups, or miles walked or run, or self-help books will be enough to give us a sense of well being.

#### **A long time ago there was a man in need of renewal.**

- A. He had grown tired of living in a world of contradiction and uncertainty.
  - 1. Psalm 73 sounds a lot like 2012 U.S.A.
  - 2. There was a time when he had it together, he was sailing true north, but life had weighed him down, now he just didn’t know if things were worth the effort.

3. *Have you ever known anyone like that?*
  4. Diets, exercise programs, self-help books—they all lacked staying power.
  5. This man was ready to give up.
- B. What was the man’s problem?
1. He had begun to doubt his faith.
  2. *Have you ever done that?*
  3. He looked around at his world and 2+2 didn’t equal 4.
- C. He saw all kinds of contradictions.
1. Good people were taking it on the chin and bad people were getting rich.
  2. The righteous were being run out of town and the ruthless were taking over the places of power.
  3. People who played by the rules and did the decent things they had been taught to do were getting the shaft by the con artists who played the game with loaded dice or a stacked deck to make sure everything came out in their favor.
- D. Verses 4-16 show a man who is tired of trying to make sense out of life.
1. These are desperate verses—a lament from a man who is ready to throw in the towel, give up, and walk away.
  2. *He is tired and discouraged, just like we are sometimes.*
  3. It doesn’t take too much contemplation on the ways of the world for a Christian to experience the “dark night of the soul.”
- E. Then we come to verse 17—“until I went into the sanctuary of God.”
1. In the sanctuary the psalmist found hope.
  2. Faith came alive again because in the sanctuary he renewed his relationship with the answerer—the living God of all life.
  3. *Where is your sanctuary—your place to go either physically, or in your mind and heart to reconnect with God? (For me—Camden Methodist, Camden Baptist, orchard behind my sister’s house, Northern Blvd. UMC)*

**We all need a place of renewal.**

- A. Life has a way of stumping us.
1. Questions come that seem to have no good answers: Why do the innocent suffer? Where is God in the face of gross injustice? What is God’s will for my life? Where can I find faith that will not be shaken by the hurricanes of contradiction and disappointment that can so brutally assault life?

2. Answers to these kinds of questions are found in relationship rather than in words.
  3. There will always be contradiction and confusion in the experience of living, but in the presence of the answerer we will prevail.
- B. Sacred space is important for our well being.
1. Eugene Peterson—(“The Pastor”)—a cabin by a lake in Montana.
  2. Our ancestors piled up stones to build altars.
  3. The great cathedrals are a testament to the value earlier people place on worship. (*Many churches now look like Wal-Mart or Best Buy—just another box store.*)
  4. The place where we sit this morning was created because people who lived before us knew they needed a place to come to and put life back together again.
- C. You and I gather here for the most significant moments of life—weddings, baptisms, funerals—because in moments like these we need to be in the place that most fully represents the sacred. (*Many people treat the church like a hall for rent. Coming to church for these events when you have no commitment to Christ or this church is a subtle form of taking the Lord’s name in vain.*)

**Conclusion:**

- A. The psalmist was confused and confounded by life until he came into the sanctuary of God.
- B. **We are too.** You can go to the gym, read all the books, and make pilgrimages to Wal-Mart, but nothing will substitute for the sanctuary of God.
- C. In this New Year, resolve to **make worship a discipline** of your life.
- D. Come to the sanctuary **regularly and often.**
- E. It is the place of renewal.
- F. It is the place to find your way through the maze of life’s questions and confusions,
- G. In the sanctuary of God burns the sacred fire of hope that is the light of the world. In the light of that fire is hope and help and truth.
- H. **Do not neglect the sanctuary of God as the place to be renewed again and again.**

## Psalm 73

A Psalm of Asaph.

- <sup>1</sup> Truly God is good to the upright,<sup>\*</sup>  
to those who are pure in heart.
- <sup>2</sup> But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled;  
my steps had nearly slipped.
- <sup>3</sup> For I was envious of the arrogant;  
I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
- <sup>4</sup> For they have no pain;  
their bodies are sound and sleek.
- <sup>5</sup> They are not in trouble as others are;  
they are not plagued like other people.
- <sup>6</sup> Therefore pride is their necklace;  
violence covers them like a garment.
- <sup>7</sup> Their eyes swell out with fatness;  
their hearts overflow with follies.
- <sup>8</sup> They scoff and speak with malice;  
loftily they threaten oppression.
- <sup>9</sup> They set their mouths against heaven,  
and their tongues range over the earth.
- <sup>10</sup> Therefore the people turn and praise them,<sup>\*</sup>  
and find no fault in them.<sup>\*</sup>
- <sup>11</sup> And they say, 'How can God know?  
Is there knowledge in the Most High?'
- <sup>12</sup> Such are the wicked;  
always at ease, they increase in riches.
- <sup>13</sup> All in vain I have kept my heart clean  
and washed my hands in innocence.
- <sup>14</sup> For all day long I have been plagued,  
and am punished every morning.
- <sup>15</sup> If I had said, 'I will talk on in this way',  
I would have been untrue to the circle of your children.
- <sup>16</sup> But when I thought how to understand this,  
it seemed to me a wearisome task,

<sup>17</sup> until I went into the sanctuary of God;  
then I perceived their end.

<sup>18</sup> Truly you set them in slippery places;  
you make them fall to ruin.

<sup>19</sup> How they are destroyed in a moment,  
swept away utterly by terrors!

<sup>20</sup> They are<sup>\*</sup> like a dream when one awakes;  
on awaking you despise their phantoms.

<sup>21</sup> When my soul was embittered,  
when I was pricked in heart,

<sup>22</sup> I was stupid and ignorant;  
I was like a brute beast towards you.

<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless I am continually with you;  
you hold my right hand.

<sup>24</sup> You guide me with your counsel,  
and afterwards you will receive me with honour.<sup>\*</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Whom have I in heaven but you?  
And there is nothing on earth that I desire other than you.

<sup>26</sup> My flesh and my heart may fail,  
but God is the strength<sup>\*</sup> of my heart and my portion for ever.

<sup>27</sup> Indeed, those who are far from you will perish;  
you put an end to those who are false to you.

<sup>28</sup> But for me it is good to be near God;  
I have made the Lord God my refuge,  
to tell of all your works.