

Does this sound familiar? In some ways, you and I are like that at this time of the year. We have had our time off. We have had fun with family and friends. Now, let's get back to work—back to life as usual.

But Jesus was different. The young Jesus refused to let his relationship with God be regulated according to some prearranged, culturally imposed schedule. Instead of going along with the return-to-business-as-usual attitude, Jesus answered the most important call of all—to be about his Father's business—to be about God's business.

What would it mean if we were to act in a similar fashion? What would it mean to live, not according to human expectations or cultural patterns, but according to what God required of us? What would it mean to be about God's business in the year 2017?

To start with, it helps to understand that the ultimate resolution a Christian can make is to live in the light of God's intentions, not human inventions. The New Year's resolution to end all resolutions is to live under the umbrella of God's expectations and to make it my business and your business to be a part of God's business in this world.

But this just begs a bigger question—"What is God's business?" As we look throughout the Scriptures, as we consider the sweep of God's work in history through many people and events over the centuries, we would have to say that God's business is TRANSFORMATION.

Let's ponder this awhile. As I thought about transformation, I wanted to know what is the commonly understood definition of transformation? The dictionary tells us: Transformation means to convert. It is the same as the word "metamorphosis." Metamorphosis is what happens when an ugly caterpillar turns into a butterfly. There is a major change in form, nature and function. But what is most important to understand is in God's act of transformation, we become what we were intended to be – what we were created by God to be.

God's business is transformation. That is what happened at Bethlehem when God became a human being. That is what is meant when the Apostle John says, "The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has never put it out." Through God's actions, hatred is turned into love, alienation into reconciliation, separation into salvation, destructive into constructive behavior, death into life.

God's business is transforming the world. When Jesus' disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, Jesus taught them the Lord's prayer which states, "Our Father, who art in heaven,

hallowed by thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." In a very real sense, every time we repeat the Lord's Prayer, we are uttering a resolution that is worth keeping. We are saying to God that we want to be in God's stream of work to transform this world to make it more like heaven.

Where should we be about God's business—the business of transformation? I believe this passage also tells us about that. The Scripture tells us: "Then Jesus went home with his parents to Nazareth and was obedient to them."

Jesus' example tells us that we are called to be transforming agents of God right where we are – the hardest place to do the work of transformation. Do you remember the old Beatle Bailey cartoons? General Half Tract is always waiting for that letter from the Pentagon. He is not satisfied with where he is or what he is doing—he is waiting for the big position that will come some day.

How many of us look at the ordinary things of life as unimportant—as mundane—as things to be tolerated until the really big thing in life comes our way? I will tell you a secret: most of our lives are lived doing the mundane things of life. It is in the ordinary that God works transformation.

One day a friend of Phillip Brookes, a great preacher and author of "O Little Town of Bethlehem," called on him and found him impatiently pacing the floor. He asked what the trouble was. With flashing eyes, Dr. Brookes shouted: "The trouble is that I am in a hurry and God is not!"

God is not in a hurry. God waited thousands of years to send Jesus to earth. Jesus was God and man in one body. Jesus realized who he was. Then God sent him home to be obedient to his parents for another 20 years before he would set out on his life's work. God is not in a hurry.

God sent Jesus back home to begin the transformation there. What I find amazing is some of Jesus' first disciples were Jesus' brothers. One of Jesus' best supporters and most loyal followers was Jesus' mother. God's business starts right where we spend the most of our time—at home, at the office, in school, in our community, in our personal relationships, in our church. It is in the everyday that we are called to be about God's business of transformation.

I was reminded of an experience I had years ago in Switzerland where I was helping run a ski

camp for American high school students. One of the special attractions for both the kids at the camp and the local Swiss people of the little village on top of the mountain where stayed was a night time torch light parade.

The Swiss people ran the ski lift just for us to go to the top of the mountain in total darkness, each skier carrying a torch, skiing down the mountain with only the light of his torch to see where he was going. Everyone had to do this in single file to give the effect of a giant snake. For the people watching from the valley, the sight was magnificent.

I will never forget the experience. The snow was deep and crisp in the cold night air. As the people watched from the village below, they could see the first faint lights, and then another, followed by more and more lights. They could see the lights but not the skiers. As we descended, we lit more and more torches until a beautiful design of warm, glowing light stretched across the frozen dark mountain.

It looked so beautiful to those who were looking on, but it was very difficult for the skiers. Each skier had to follow the person in front of him, controlling his speed to a very slow pace. They had to keep in the same track of the person in front with only the light of your torch showing you where to go. It was an exhausting experience.

My friends, when we make the resolution to end all resolutions, to be about God's business – the business of transformation, we will be in the business of spreading God's light to a dark world. Those around us both today and into the future will appreciate the work being done. They will see and experience that transformation in our children, at work, in our church, and in our community. They might not be able to connect the positive transformation going on with a specific person. They might not know how hard it was for the person who was bearing the torch, but they will benefit from those who have chosen to be about God's business of transformation.

We, like the skiers coming down that mountain in Switzerland, might not be seen. No distant preacher will use our names. Our names might not be known or remembered as bearers of the torch of transformation. All that matters is that we leave some light behind us as we go. God gives each of us the light of his Son Jesus Christ and provides us the strength to bear the light of Christ through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

A resolution worth keeping is to resolve to be about God's business—the business of transformation in 2017.

A Resolution Worth Keeping

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Luke 2:41-52; I Samuel 2:18-20, 26

January has come and gone – all too quickly. What is one of things we do at the end of one year and the beginning of a new year? Many people, me included, make resolutions. Every year, I take a paper tablet. I sit down and reflect on what I believe God is calling me to do that year. I write all those things down. Those things become my resolutions for the New Year. I pray about them and I put them away. Around about this time, I take them out and see how I am doing. What I find amazing is that the really meaningful resolutions, I make some progress toward keeping.

So, what about you? Would anyone be so bold to share a word or phrase that would describe some of your resolutions – exercise more, eat less, a slower lifestyle, worship more often. What is most interesting about resolutions is that most of them get packed away with the last of the Christmas decorations. By Epiphany, our behavior in the New Year is just as tarnished as it was before January 1. What is common about New Year's resolutions is we do not keep them.

What if we had a resolution that would be engaging enough, challenging enough, important enough, and powerful enough to last all year long? Luke's story about Jesus when he was a boy offers us an example of the ultimate resolution. What would that resolution be? The resolution that ends all resolutions would be to declare from this day forward we will be "about (our) Father's business", be about God's business. That is what Jesus said, which is recorded in this passage from Luke.

Joseph and Mary, their friends, neighbors and relatives, all made the required pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Passover Feast. But as soon as the allotted time for the holiday was over, they hit the road, anxious to get back to all the chores and the responsibilities that filled their lives. Joseph, a craftsman working with wood, undoubtedly had projects awaiting his attention. Mary would have had the hundreds of time-consuming tasks it took to keep her family fed and clothed. Like most of us at the end of an extended vacation, they were probably looking forward to getting back to the comfortable familiarity of their own hearth and home.