

IF

PRAYER

Scripture: Phil. 2:1-11

This is the first Sunday in a brand new year. And I don't know about you, but that statement fills my heart with joy and anticipation. We look forward to this year with uncertainty. And unfortunately, we put a lot of qualifiers on it. We say, *if* such –n- such happens it will be a good year. *If* I am able to accomplish this or that, it will be a good year. *If* my husband/wife/children change in this area, it will be a good year. As, I said, we have a lot of qualifiers as to what will make it a good year or not. Well, this morning God has His own list of 'if's' for you. I am going to read our text again, but I will read it out of the *Message Bible*. ***“If you've gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you care— then do me a favor.”*** Let's stop right there for a moment.

God is saying, that as we worship on this first Sunday in a brand new year that he wants you to do something for Him. He wants you to look back on the year of 2010. And He wants you to be honest with yourself and honest with Him. He says, think about it:

- **if you've gotten anything at all out of following Christ**
- **if His love has made any difference in your life**
- **if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you**
- **if you have a heart**
- **if you care**

(comments – H.S. on each one)

Only you can answer these questions of *if's*. Only you can answer yes or no. But God says *if* you can answer yes to these five questions, then He wants you to do Him a favor. Wow! Isn't that amazing that God would ask a favor of you. Isn't it amazing that God would ask a favor of me. In our sermon on New Year's Eve, got gave us four things that he wanted us to leave behind in the new year. Those four things were: disappointment, anger, jealousy and failure.

You have to get a copy of the sermon to understand what that was all about. This morning God is going to tell us five things that He wants us to take on in the new year. But notice that there is a qualifier here, you can only do these five things *if* your answers were yes to His question. ***“If you’ve gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you care—then do me a favor.”*** Again, I will be reading from different versions of the Bible. I’ll be reading from verses 2-5, taking each point one at a time. The first thing that God asks of us for the new year is that we:

- agree with each other. The KJV & NIV says to be ‘like-minded.’ The Amplified calls it *living in harmony* with one another.

Now that is an awesome request. God says if we want this brand new year to be a year of peace and joy, we must learn to live in harmony with each other. God says *if you’ve gotten anything out of following Him* then you have to strive to live in harmony with one another. The question can be asked, ‘why is it that we don’t get along? Why is it that there is so much strife and division not only in our homes, but in the church as well. God says as believers this means that we all must learn to work together and to *serve one another*. (comments – H.S.) God says that in this new year of 2011, He wants us as believers to live in harmony with one another and He also wants us to:

- love one another – be deep-spirited friends. One translation calls it being one in spirit and purpose.

I don’t know about you but I like the idea that God didn’t simply say that we were to love one another. Because so often we have minimized or cheapened the word love. But God goes on to describe what He means. His says our love should reveal that we are ***one in spirit and one in purpose***. Our love should show that we are *deep-spirited* friends. Our friendship with one another is not simply on the surface level but it is a deep friendship where our spirits become as one. This is why so many people have difficulty in their marriages because they didn’t become *deep-spirited* before they became lovers. (comments – H.S.) They never became *one in spirit*

and one in purpose. God says *if His love has made any difference in our lives* then we are to love one another as He has loved us. What's next that God wants us to do or not to do:

- Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourself.

God says *'if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you,'* then we should strive to live in a spirit of togetherness. The Message Bible says it this way. *“Don't push your way to the front: don't sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead.* (comments – H.S.)

- Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. God says that we should not be obsessed with getting our own advantage. That we are to forget ourselves long enough to lend a helping hand to someone else. The final point of what God wants us to take into this new year is:
 - Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.

In my limited way of thinking I would call Jesus' attitude as being one of willing saying no to self! This same Jesus is the One who created the worlds. But when He walked on this earth, He never flaunted His power!!! He lived a life of submission, meekness and servanthood. God says that for the year of 2011, He wants you to develop an attitude like that. Where you don't walk around flaunting your power; where you don't walk around flaunting your rights. Jesus gave up His rights. He gave up His right to life itself. We find it so hard to give up our rights. *I have the right to defend myself, I have the right to tell you off, I have the right to having my own way, I have the right to take what I want in this world.* What if Jesus had of thought that way? But, no, He was obedient; all the way to death on the cross.

God says **if you have a heart** for Him, **if you care** about the sacrifices that He made so that you could have eternal life; then allow Him to develop in you an attitude like our Lord!

The ball is back in your court. Only you can answer the question of these **if's**. And if your answer is yes to them, for the new year of 2011 God wants you and me to:

- live together in harmony
- love one another, become deep-spirited friends
- not to do anything out of selfish ambition
- not to only be concerned about ourselves, but being concerned for others as well
- have the mind of Christ -develop an attitude like our Lords

PRAYER

INVITATIONAL HYMN