

Soul Reset: What Kind of Day Has it Been?



Happy New Year! Have you spent much time on social media over the

past few days? So much of this time of the new year is spent figuring out what we're going to do differently this year to make sure that this next 366 day period (because it's a leap year) is somehow different and therefore better than the last year.

We make resolutions to live more simply or be more present with our families. We make resolutions to eat better and exercise more. We make these resolutions to improve our lives; but what about our lives of faith? Who here made a New Year's resolution? Who here is still in the running for keeping that resolution? Who here made a resolution that had had anything to do with prayer or scripture or living a life that more resembles the life of Jesus than it does today? Over the next six weeks, we're going to spend some time with this idea, the idea of using the start of this new year to undergo what Rev. Junius Dotson calls a soul reset and in so doing grow in our faith and our identity as a disciple.



So, what is a Soul Reset? Well, think of the things that get reset in our

world: we reset our cell phones when they're not working right by turning them off and on again. We do the same with our computers. When we sell a device of some kind, we do a factory reset, taking it back to its condition at the moment it left the factory. So a soul reset is a hard stop, a deep look inward and an intentional look at God. A soul reset is pouring out ourselves before God and laying our lives at the altar so that God can make us whole. John's gospel says that in Jesus is life and life abundant; a soul reset may just bring us into the life that Jesus had in mind.

And the idea of a soul reset didn't start with me or Rev. Dotson. The idea started with Jesus. In our gospel text today, Jesus is presenting a series of teachings to a crowd and he ends this series of teachings by giving an invitation to the crowd to "Come unto

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Him” (What great words to start a new year with!) “Come to me, all you that are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you.” John’s disciples ask Jesus who he is, “Are you the one who’s coming or do we await another?” And after giving a series of teaching I’d commend to your reading, Jesus says, “Come and find out who I am. Come to me. Come. Come and I’ll give you rest; come and I’ll teach you. Come.”

I love these words from Jesus. They’re familiar; there’s a Lutheran church in Aberdeen that I drove past every time I came back to Northern State’s campus that has them over their front door. I’m sure they’re familiar to you, as well. These are well-known and well-loved words from the Savior of the World. They’re so familiar even that we look past them. So, let’s shake it up a little bit and hear Matthew’s gospel from the Message interpretation from Eugene Peterson: Jesus says to the crowd and to you and



me: “Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get

away with me, and you’ll recover real life...Walk with me and work with me; watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.”



That’s what a soul reset is. Learning the unforced rhythms of grace. As

you think about your own soul reset and your own response to Jesus’ invitation in our scripture today, I want you to think of these words from Matthew’s Gospel as an invitation to our soul reset and our journey of laying our lives at the altar. Jesus also says to take on his yoke. When Jesus offers to share our burdens by becoming our "yoke-mate," the weight of all the baggage we carry—even the weight of our New Years Resolutions—quietly slips off our shoulders. Jesus' yoke--though "easy" and the burden "light"--nonetheless gives us direction and purpose for our lives. We no longer

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need to create and re-create ourselves--we are now being reset to live in Christ's likeness rather than a likeness that we've designed for ourselves.

And while this all seems all well and good, you may be wondering what a soul reset looks like in practical terms. A soul reset is learning the unforced rhythms of grace and developing spiritual practices that help us focus our lives on God. We have to intentionally create habits that keep us close to Jesus. We also have to unlearn a few things. In his book *Soul Reset*, Junius Dotson writes, "I've also had to unlearn the idea that going to church on Sundays counted as my only time with God for the week. Going to corporate worship is one [habit] and is an important practice. But if we're not seeking God daily, we will not experience the fullness of life Jesus offers to us."



I am an absurdly loyal fan of the screenwriting of Aaron Sorkin. I own

almost everything he's produced for television and have ignored critical reception telling me that some of what Sorkin has written isn't very good.

But, there's a thread that goes through every show Sorkin does, and it's this question: "What kind of day has it been?" It's used as an episode title in every show Sorkin has written, and it actually comes from when his play-turned-movie *A Few Good Men* was on Broadway. At the end of the show, as the cast and crew were checking in with each other, that would be the first question Sorkin would ask: "What kind of day has it been?" And it meant: how'd the show go? Did something go wrong? Did something happen that made the show better? Every day, every show, they'd get together and ask this question.

I love this idea, and not just because it came from Sorkin. I like it because it's such a good question that really can help us think about our faith and devotion to Jesus.

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In fact, there was a man named Ignatius of Loyola who instructed people to ask the same question that Aaron Sorkin asked his people at the end of every day; only Ignatius said it a few hundred years before Sorkin was born. What Ignatius invited people into was a prayer of examen, a reflection of noticing where God is moving in our lives every single day. Jesus invites us by saying, “Come unto me all of you who are weary or carrying burdens.” We carry burdens, don’t we? None of us make it to the end of the day feeling as good as we did at the start of the day. So, we are invited to bring the day to Jesus. To ask earnestly, “What kind of day has it been?” Did we notice God working in some way? Did we handle a certain situation the best we could have? When did we feel disconnected from God’s presence? In asking this every single day, we start to notice more and more; we’re more in tune with what God’s up to, and holding ourselves accountable to living a life of faith forces us to actually walking the walk.

At the start of the year, we have the opportunity to do something new, to incorporate a new practice and to give our souls and lives a factory reset. Think about it; pray about it. Hear Jesus calling to you, “Come unto me; what kind of day has it been?”