

## Here We go Again!

Barry McCarter 7/1/18

### Philippians 3:10-14

#### Sermon Summary

The exclamation “Here we go again!” often connotes a feeling of exasperation with an expected rerun of some quite repetitive event – like a New Year with its typical highlights and lowlights of the past year as well as resolutions toward the year to come.

However, the Christian life is not, and never was, intended to be tedious or humdrum in the way it views the past or the future. In 1924, Eric Liddell (of *Chariots of Fire* movie biography fame, who was once described as being “totally without vanity”) won the Olympic gold medal for the 400 metres. He said, “God made me fast, and when I run I feel his pleasure.” As we begin 2018, we also ought to “feel God’s pleasure” in the tasks he has equipped us to undertake.

Paul in Philippians 3:10-14 exhorts us not to focus on the past, but to “press on and move forward to the prize that awaits us”. Step one before that race, however, is “to know him [Christ]” – that goal ought to be ours as we enter into the journey awaiting us.

This coming year will be as uncertain as the past. Yes, 3 new individuals (Ardern, Peters, and Shaw) will lead our country – hopefully wisely – but they are of unknown quality. Natural disasters will undoubtedly occur. Other disruptions will interrupt our tranquil life. All these are inevitable. But what, or whom, will you put first? In whom will you place your trust?

Our “Come to Bethlehem” outreach – enormously popular – draws visitors to the focus of the presentation – the manger and the birth of the Christ child.

Christmas is not only a manger scene, neither is it a fancy dressed up man handing out presents to children, partying, or the singing of carols. It is something far deeper than its trimmings. It causes us, or at least it is meant to, to think and reason. God puts to Isaiah (1:18) a directive:

“Come let us reason together.” In essence, he is telling you, as he does every human being, to come into a personal relationship with him. He offers forgiveness (read that scripture) and invites a conversation about everything you do and think about life. He wants to be part of your decision making. Our personal relationship with God begins as an **intellectual exercise**.

Recently, we have had good weather. Everything in the garden looked lovely. Then along came a weather bomb from the tropics and dumped more rain on us in 2 days than all that fell in the previous two months combined.

Life is like that. Into tranquility comes unexpected disaster. A Christian never receives a “get out of jail free” card as part of his or her acceptance into the faith. The Apostle Paul – a

remarkable human blessed greatly and powerfully by God –offered a litany of disasters that befell his life as a preacher. (Read the list in 2 Corinthians 11:24-27). There are hardships in life serving God, no matter how diligent we may be in following His decrees and statutes. Through all the hardships, Paul could still say that he wanted to know Christ and “the power of his resurrection” and “share his sufferings” to “attain the resurrection from the dead” (Philippians 3:10-11). His goal was clear, and he was prepared to do what was needed to attain it.

Maize is the largest food crop grown in the world. (Rice and wheat close behind.) America plants maize seeds in an area that would cover the entire land mass of New Zealand. NZ’s maize crop averages 12 metric tons per hectare. There is a farmer in America, David Hula of Charles City, Virginia, who produces more than 2.5 times that NZ amount. He is the official world champ in this discipline. In his speeches to farmers throughout America, he never hesitates to tell his listeners the reason for his success – constantly giving thanks to God for all the endeavours he undertakes and success he enjoys.

Will we do the same as we enter our New Year and begin our “resolutions?”

Knowing Christ is not merely understanding the **facts** about him, but knowing him **intimately** and **actively**.

We should earnestly pray and ask the Lord once again for the opportunity to faithfully follow him this year. Will you “**press on** toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14)?

In Luke 5:4-6 is found a description of Jesus drawing the fisherman Simon Peter to his ministry. No fish have been caught by Peter and the others, yet Jesus tells them to try one more time. Simon reluctantly answers in the vein of it’s not worth it, but because he has just heard Jesus preaching, something tells him that this man is different. He calls him “master” then follows his excuse with the words, “**Nevertheless, at your word**, I will let down the nets” (v.5).

Simon was faithful to Jesus’ words, and Jesus proved true in providing the catch. So it is that we should offer all we are in service to the Lord no matter the context. You will find that God will be so pleased when followers of Jesus faithfully serve Him that He makes them fruitful in many amazing ways.