"PRESSING FORWARD"

A Sermon By

Rev. Philip A. C. Clarke

Park Avenue United Methodist Church
106 East 86th Street
New York, New York 10028
January 1st, 1989
TEXT: "But one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus"

(Philippians 3: 13)

INTRODUCTION

These past few days have seen us "closing the books" on another year's work. For most of us the changing of the calendar is a time for taking stock. It's a time for review...for decisions...and yes, a time for resolutions.

In light of the passing of the old year and the coming of a new year, it may well be that you've been doing some private evaluating - taking stock of yourself, your situation, your relationships. Where are we going? And what's it all adding up to? What are we here for? What are the real values...the important things of life?

Yes, it's good for us to pause occasionally in the midst of the rush of life in this city and come back to "home base" in order to get our bearings. And what better time to do this than on the first day of a new year, in Church, to confirm our insights and feelings at the altar, hopefully remembering that "Today is the first day of the rest of your life".

DEVELOPMENT

We're active people, constantly on the "go-go"...huffing and puffing and sometimes complaining of too much to do and not enough time to get it all done. Some rush through life without any sense of a commanding purpose...not knowing where they're going.

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"Like so many people who have no object in life, he was busy from morning till night".

And remember that line from Thoreau's "Walden" where he tells us that he "went to the woods in order to live deliberately". "To live deliberately"...we'd do well to reflect on that line. Living deliberately means having a plan and a purpose in order to avoid drifting. Benjamin Franklin pointed out to us in his delightful autobiography that early along in his life he concluded that the reason so many people fail is simply because they have no plan, no purpose to their lives. They tend to muddle along through life...hoping for the best...usually ending up with the worst. Clearly established goals. A game plan, if you will, by which to achieve those goals can be so helpful. I like those words of Paul that we've adopted as our text for today,

"But one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus".

"Forgetting what lies behind...and straining forward to what lies ahead ..."
DEAR ABBY  Friday morning I went down to Manhattan Savings Bank to take care of some personal financial business, hoping to get there before the line got too long. I walked in and quickly noted that just about every one in Yorkville was there to get some interest on their savings account and so I settled in for a long wait. Fortunately I had picked up a copy of Friday's Post figuring I'd get caught up on how the Knicks had done the night before in Chicago.

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DEAR ABBY: Every year you publish some New Year's resolutions. I cut that column out and taped it on my bathroom mirror where I could read it every morning. I want you to know that it has helped me to become a better person. I am not saying that I kept every one of those resolutions every day, but I kept most of them, and they have now become habits that have made a remarkable improvement in my personality and character.

I hope you will run it every year. I'm sure it will benefit many others as it has me.

NEVER TOO OLD

DEAR NEVER: My "resolutions" column has become an established annual tradition (and personally I might add that they've been in more than one of my sermons at this time of year).

DEAR READERS: These New Year's resolutions are based on the original credo of Alcoholics Anonymous. I have taken the liberty of using that theme with some variations of my own.

I. Just for today I will live through this day only, and not set far reaching goals to try to overcome all my problems at once. I know I can do something for 12 hours that would appall me if I felt that I had to keep it up for a lifetime.

II. Just for today I will be happy. Abraham Lincoln said, 'Most folks are about as happy as they make up their minds to be'. He was right. I will not dwell on thoughts that depress me. I will chase them out of my mind and replace them with happy thoughts.

III. Just for today I will adjust myself to what is. I will face reality. I will correct those things that I can correct and accept those things that I cannot correct.

IV. Just for today I will improve my mind. I will not be a mental loafer. I will force myself to read something that requires effort, thought and concentration.
V. Just for today I will do something positive to improve my health. If I'm a smoker, I'll make an honest effort to quit. If I'm overweight, I'll eat nothing I know to be fattening. And I will force myself to exercise - even if it's only walking around the block or using the stairs instead of the elevator.

VI. Just for today I'll do something I've been putting off for a long time. I'll finally write that letter, make that phone call, clean that closet, or straighten out those dresser drawers.

VII. Just for today, before I speak I will ask myself, 'Is it true? Is it kind? Is it necessary?' And if the answer to those questions is negative, I won't say it.

VIII. Just for today I will make a conscious effort to be agreeable. I will look as good as I can, dress becomingly, talk softly, act courteously and not interrupt when someone else is talking. Just for today I'll not improve anybody except myself.

IX. Just for today I will have a program. I may not follow it exactly, but I will have it, thereby saving myself from two pests: hurry and indecision.

X. Just for today I will have a quiet half-hour to relax alone. During this time I will reflect on my behavior and get a better perspective on my life.

XI. Just for today I will be unafraid. I will gather the courage to do what is right and take the responsibility for my own actions. I will expect nothing from the world, but I will realize that as I give to the world, the world will give to me.

Have a happy, healthy New Year. And pray for peace!

LOVE,
ABBY.

ADD ONE MORE

There's a good "road map" for the "pressing forward" journey, and yes...remember that "life's a journey...not a destination". A good game plan to follow. To those eleven rules, let me add one more, thus rounding it out to TWELVE.

Just for today, make a greater effort to include God in your plan. Just for today, make the effort to devote some serious time to a bit of Christian growth - service, study. Just for today ask Him to lead you and to guide you in your decisions. Try to remember that line from Isaiah which I use in our Call to Worship each Sunday, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength". And don't be afraid to exercise your soul - work your way into forgiveness. Do a good deed for somebody without letting them know it.
LAST SUPPER

Last evening found many of the clubs and restaurants of our city filled with people eating the last supper of the old year and drinking a toast to the New Year. As Christians we are reminded of the Last Supper that Jesus had with His disciples. It has come down to us across twenty centuries of time and has become for His followers a Sacrament of Dedication.

In a few moments you will be kneeling at the Altar to receive the Sacrament. Let those moments be for you a time of high resolve, a time of decision-making, a time of confirming feelings of high intent. And as you rise and depart, may you carry away with you the directive implicit in these familiar and closing lines:

"I said to the man who stood at the Gate of the Year, 'Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown'.

And he replied, 'Go out into the darkness...and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than a light and safer than any known way'."

PRAYER

O God Eternal....whose love is unfailing and who canst make all things new, may these be moments of high resolve for each of us present this hour on this the first day of a New Year.

We praise Thee that our times are controlled by Thee. We praise Thee for Thy goodness and mercy which follow us.

We thank Thee for failures and sorrows Thou didst weave into a pattern of good for us this past year. We thank Thee for Thy forgiveness for things which we should not have done and for the opportunity to start afresh, to make a new beginning.

We need Your help to carry out the noble purposes which we have envisioned. Grant that we may show forth our thanks by deepening our loyalty and obedience to Thee, in our labors and in our leisure, in our tears and in our laughter, in our worship and in our services to others.

Look with tender mercy upon those who are sick. Visit them with the quiet assurance of Your care. Encircle the bereaved with Your warming, healing presence. Point our markers on the trail for those who may have lost their way.

And as we kneel at Your table this hour and receive the bread and wine, strengthen us, O God, to meet whatever may be ahead of us in the days of this New Year. For the race is short, even at its longest and we would run it well, and to Your glory. Amen
ANNOUNCEMENTS: Sunday, January 1, 1988

HOLY COMMUNION

It is the custom of this Church to celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Communion on the first Sunday of the month. We like to announce - especially for the benefit of visitors in the congregation - that the Table of our Lord in this Church is open to all...that one does not have to be a member of this parish, nor of this denomination in order to receive the Sacrament. His Table is open to all and we invite all of you to receive the Sacrament on this the First Sunday of a New Year, trusting that the time for you may be an occasion of spiritual renewal, a time of reconsecration of your life to the will of God as it comes to us in the life and love of Jesus Christ - God's Son and our Lord and Saviour.

The elements will be served to you in the pews by the ushers. We add this word: that upon receiving the elements please hold them until all have been served, and then together as one family of faith we shall commune.

GREETING / VISITORS

We greet the visitors in the congregation this morning...delighted to have you with us and we hope that the opportunity will be ours to greet you in a more personal way following this service - either at the door as you depart, or...time permitting...downstairs in the Russell Room where tea and coffee will be served.

Be free in the sharing of your name with us. Take a moment to fill out a visitor card, or to sign one of the Guest Books in the narthex. Join us on other Sundays in our worship. Come and work with us in our programs of outreach and service to others in this community.

We're primarily a neighborhood Church...most of our people are within walking distance. This is the fourth building out of which this congregation has served. We date back to 1837 as a Church and recently celebrated 150 years. We minister in the name of Christ and it is in His name and in His spirit that we bid you welcome on this first Sunday of a New Year.

EPIPHANY / THANK YOU

January 6th - is the date of Epiphany. Epiphany marks the visit of the Wise Men to the manger of Bethlehem.

As we move into the Season of Epiphany, we'll be taking down our red banners of Advent and the wreaths and the trees will be removed. I always love the Christmas Season in our Church - the music, the touches of red and green, the presence of the children in our services and the Advent wreath and candle-lighting, the greeting of friends from other days back for a visit...our students home for the holidays. It was a good Christmas and I thank all of you who took on extra responsibilities to make it so for us, and who responded with such generous Christmas gifts for the Christmas appeal.

A special word of thanks to the Church choir for their lifting and joyous music...always so moving and inspiring. Also, special thanks to those who "pitched in" to make our Christmas Eve service so beautiful and meaningful to those who filled the sanctuary and the Russell Room that night!
LOOKING AHEAD

The last four months have been very busy ones for us here in the Church. Building the budget. Conducting the canvass. The Church Fair. The Charge Conference. The reception of twenty plus new members. The Sunday School party and pageant. A rummage sale along the way.

We now turn a corner into a New Year and begin to make plans for the weeks ahead. Our Administrative Council will be meeting early next month. The Trustees as well as several committee meetings are already "in the works" for January.

Saturday, February 1st, is the date of our mid-Winter rummage sale and workers are being enlisted for that sale.

FINANCIAL

The 1989 boxes of offering envelopes are available downstairs on a table in the rear of the Russell Room. Be sure to pick up the box that has your name on it.

ALSO

Be sure to pick up the January issue of our monthly news sheet. Copies are on the table by the door as well as downstairs. Also, take along with you your copy of "A Year With the Bible" pamphlet...which provides you with a Bible reading suggestion for the next 363 days.

NEXT SUNDAY

Next Sunday John Simms - who has done such a terrific job for us in leading the canvass - will begin a Sunday morning class on Methodism. Note the insert in the bulletin. Let's have a good turn out for it. 9:15 Sunday mornings. Third floor fellowship hall area.

OFFERING

Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive". In this spirit, let us worship God with our morning offering.

CHRISTMAS APPEAL

We are deeply grateful for the most generous response to the Christmas appeal. The outpouring of love and concern which the many gifts represent means a great deal to those entrusted with the financial management of our Church. Thank you very much.
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ANTHEM: "O How Amiable"

"O how amiable are Thy dwellings, Thou Lord of Hosts! My soul hath desire and longing to enter into the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God. Yea, the sparrow hath found her an house, and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young; even Thy altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King and my God.

Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house; they will be always praising Thee. The glorious majesty of the Lord, our God, be upon us. O prosper Thou the work of our hands upon us. O prosper Thou our handywork. O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come; our shelter from the stormy blast and our eternal home."

ORGAN POSTLUDE

The organ postlude - a final offering of our praise to God - is played after the Benediction. Time permitting, we invite you to share in the beauty of it.

FOR THOSE WHO SING

New members are always welcome to audition to sing in the Choir. Rehearsals are held on Wednesdays at 6:15 pm in the downstairs Choir Room. Now's a good time to join as the Choir begins to prepare anthems for the coming months of January, February and March.

"HOUNDS OF HEAVEN"

The "Hounds of Heaven" meet on Tuesday evening at 6:30 in Fellowship Hall. New friends are always welcome. George Leopold is class leader. Come and share in the study of Dieterich Bonhoeffer's book, The Cost of Discipleship.

ALDERSGATE CLASS

The Aldersgate Class meets on Wednesday evening for Bible study in Fellowship Hall. The class meets at 7:30 pm. New friends are always most welcome.

PLEDGE CARDS ARE STILL BEING RECEIVED

Pledge cards are still being received in the Church office. If you haven't sent in your 1989 card of intention, may we invite you to do so today. We still have some 30 to 40 people we hope to hear from regarding giving plans for the new year. See John Simms if you need a pledge card.

WEEKLY OFFERING ENVELOPES

The 1989 boxes of weekly offering envelopes are on the table in the rear of the Russell Room. Pick up the box that has your name on it. Take it home with you. Save the Church some postage expense.

If you haven't pledged and would like a box of weekly offering envelopes, speak to John Simms.
A NEW HYMNAL

Gifts for the new hymnal of the United Methodist Church continue to be received. A new hymnal costs $10.50. The price goes up after January 31st. Our church needs $3,600 to cover the cost of 350 new hymnals and we're pleased to report that one-third of that amount has already been gratefully received. It's a nice way to remember a loved one or perhaps an anniversary. There's an envelope in the pew if you're tempted to respond with a gift.

GOOD NEWS

John Simms, Chairperson of our 1989 Canvass, reports that we have gone over our dollar goal of $130,000, but that we need another 47 pledges to reach our pledge goal of 240. To date, 193 pledges totalling $130,251 have been gratefully received!

SAVE THE DATE

Save the Sunday evening of January the 15th for the first Fellowship Supper of 1989 of our Church. Sponsored by the Outreach Committee, we shall come together around six o'clock in Fellowship Hall to celebrate the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Supper will be served from 6:30 to 7:15. A donation of $3.00 will cover the cost of the evening meal. Further details regarding supper arrangements will be in next Sunday's bulletin.

Following the evening meal, Dr. Gloster B. Current, a former Administrator of the NAACP and a retired Minister of the New York Annual Conference, will speak on the subject, "King, How Fares the Dream Today?"

It promises to be a good evening and all are invited to share in it. Circle the date and plan to come.
PARK AVENUE
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
106 East 86th Street
New York, N.Y. 10028
AT 9-6997

CHURCH DIRECTORY
Rev. Philip A. C. Clarke ................... Minister
Mr. Lyndon Woodside ........ Organist-Choir Director
Mr. Jack Schmidt ...................... Business Manager
Mrs. Judy Ferland .................... Secretary
Mrs. Judith Keisman .... Day School Director
Mr. Roberto Meriles ........ Custodian

GENERAL OFFICERS
Lay Members, Annual Conference ........ Mr. William Bell
Mr. Edward J. Brown
President, Board of Trustees .......... Mr. William Bell
Chairman, Administrative Council .... Mrs. Bobbie Heron
Chairman, Education Committee ....... Mrs. Kathy Simms
Chairman, Fellowship Committee ....... Mrs. Pat Henry
Chairman, Finance Committee ........ Mr. Larry Morales
Co-Chairmen, Membership Committee ... Mrs. Ann Bryant
Mr. Robert Gardner
Chairman, Outreach Committee ......... Miss Janet Ernst
Chairman, Worship Committee .......... Mr. Michael Schaffield
Co-Chairmen, Day School .............. Mrs. Anette Lewis
Mrs. John Lombardo
Chairman, Ushers ....................... Ms. Effie French
Mr. Len Williams
Superintendent, Sunday School ....... Mrs. Holly Galgano

PARK AVENUE
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS
January 1, 1989

ORDER OF WORSHIP
11 A.M.

ORGAN "The Old Year Is Now Gone" Bach

CALL TO WORSHIP

HYMN NO. 397 "As With Gladness Men of Old"

APostles' CREED

GLORIA PATRI Page 738

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SCRIPTURE Philippians 3: 12 - 16 Page 792

PARISH CONCERNS

ANTHEM "O How Amiable" Vaughan Williams

PRESENTATION OF THE OFFERING WITH THE DOXOLOGY

HYMN NO. 509 "Great God, We Sing That Mighty Hand"

MEDITATION "Pressing Forward" Mr. Clarke

PRAYER

***

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

The Kyrie (The Choir)
TheInvitation (No. 832)
The General Confession
The Prayer for Pardon
The Prayer for Consecration
The Prayer for Humble Access
The Agnus Dei
The Partaking of the Elements
The Prayer of Resolution

HYMN NO. 28 "O God, Our Help In Ages Past"

BENEDICTION

ORGAN "Fugue In B Minor" Bach

*** Interval for Ushering

LAY READER

We welcome Cathy Jean Syble to the lectern today. A native of Enfield, Connecticut, a graduate of the College of New Rochelle, Cathy is Assistant Vice President and Director of Risk Management for Dean Witter Financial Services, Inc.. Here in the Church, she is a member of the Pastor-Parish Relations, and Membership Committees and sings in the Choir.

ALTAR FLOWERS

The flowers on the altar today are in loving memory of Virginia and Arthur Fry, given by their daughter, Lynn Fry MacShane.

GREETERS AND USHERS

The greeters today are Cathy Syble and Bob Gardner. The ushers are Len Williams, Ken Barclay, William Chambers, Carl Condra, Rick Kilbride, Robert Lewis, John Lombardo, and Charles Wire.

AN INVITATION

Coffee and tea will be served in the Russell Room following the service. Members and friends are invited to share in these moments of warmth made possible for us today by Bob Gardner, Ken Borgeson, Bruce Evans, Karen and Jeffrey Goss and Marlene Marinangeli.

SUNDAY SCHOOL AND ADULT BIBLE CLASS

Sessions of Church School for children are offered Sunday mornings from ten-thirty to twelve. Nursery care for infants and toddlers is available on the fourth floor. The Adult Bible Class meets on Sunday morning at 9:30 in Fellowship Hall. John Simms is serving as the teacher for the study of the Gospel of Matthew.
Sunday, January 5, 75

Dear Mr. Clarke,

Your message at the 11:30 AM service this morning was very helpful to me, and I thank you. I would like a copy of your message, if possible, for easy reference. I'm enclosing $1.00 to cover any cost to you.

Thanks,

[Signature]

1270 Fifth Ave. - 9M
N.Y., N.Y. 10029