

## The Mulligan

For Christmas this year my Uncle gave me a pair of golf shoes. I have not played golf in six years so he encouraged me to get out and go. So I went. As expected I played very bad . . . well, to be honest, I probably played my normal game.

Several years ago I was paired up with a group of senior golfers at a local golf course. I had decided to play an afternoon by myself to clear my mind and exercise a little. Unfortunately the course was a little crowded and I got paired with these gentlemen. That was ok, I enjoy talking to most people and just because I don't play very well doesn't bother me the way it does some golfers (throwing clubs, yelling choice expletives or even walking off the course after leaving their golf cart in the pond). I just go to where I hit the ball and hit it again . . . and again.

Anyway, after I had played ten holes we were on the eleventh tee, a par three, and I managed to hit the ball about 20 yards beyond the hole into the woods. One of the men came to me and said, *"Would you like a mulligan?"* Now, a mulligan is a unique opportunity in the life of golf. It is a chance to forget about that terrible shot you just made and take another without any penalty. It is not something a polite golfer ever accepts unless encouraged to by those playing with him. I thanked them and said, yes I would. After all, everyone likes a new opportunity to start over and hopefully do better the next time. I hit it into the woods again. At least I am consistent.

After we got back to the carts another gentleman asked me, *"What do you do for a living?"* I replied, *"I am a pastor"*. He said, *"I knew it! I knew it! Nobody can play as bad as you do and not cuss!"* I smiled and said, *"Thank you."* At least I am a pleasant, albeit challenged golfer.

I digress from my point.

The Christian life can be a little like my golf game, sometimes we need a "mulligan". We make a bad choice, we say the wrong thing, we leave the playing field of our Christian life feeling a failure and sometimes we think about just quitting. Then somebody comes along and gives us a new pair of golf shoes and says, *"Would you like to take a mulligan?"* Just like Jesus. *"Come unto me all ye that weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."*

This encouragement Christ gives us is called **mercy**. Mercy is not giving us what we deserve. And His mercy endures forever. The thing that makes mercy so great is that it comes with **grace**. Grace is receiving something wonderful that we don't deserve. A second chance . . . or even a third . . . or . . . you understand.

Golfers give out a mulligan because . . .

1. They want one themselves
2. They've been there and they pity you
3. They don't want to waste anymore time looking for your lost ball

Jesus gives us a new opportunity in life for one reason . . . He loves us. As you face this new year, take a mulligan. Take the time to start over in your Christian life. For those of us who have placed our lives and future in Christ and His love, *"All the old things are passing away. Behold! All things are becoming new"* (2 Corinthians 5:17). Rest in His mercy and grace, don't give up. The best is yet to come!

Pastor Howard