

THREE DEVOTIONS | Jesus Christ is the Same...

Wednesday, December 31, 2014 – New Years' Eve

...Yesterday

- ¹ Lord, you have been our dwelling place
throughout all generations.
- ² Before the mountains were born
or you brought forth the whole world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.
- ³ You turn people back to dust,
saying, "Return to dust, you mortals."
- ⁴ A thousand years in your sight
are like a day that has just gone by,
or like a watch in the night.
- ⁵ Yet you sweep people away in the sleep of death—
they are like the new grass of the morning:
- ⁶ In the morning it springs up new,
but by evening it is dry and withered.

– Psalm 90:1-6

It's hard to believe that in 6 1/2 hours we begin another year. But we can learn from history. Sometimes it pays to look back at the previous year to see the amazing things our amazing God has done.

This past year people died. Famous people, not-so-famous people; people dear to us and people we didn't know; to defend our freedom, trying to take away our freedom. Whomever, whenever, wherever it happened, one thing was the same—God was in control. The Psalmist reminds us of this today. You gave us life. You take our life. You, O Lord, are the keeper of body and soul. You are God.

Things happened this year. Good things, bad things; exciting things and boring things; new things and old things. But things happened, and each of these events were blessings from God.

Troubling times happened for us this year. With family, at work, at home, in our personal lives, in our public lives. We've all experienced trouble, heartache, hardship, and testing. But God was there. He always has been.

You've sinned this year. There were those sins of choice and those sins of habit. There were those sins that were done in secret and those sins that were exposed. There were the sins that were embarrassing, the sins that were accidental, and the sins that you truly feel sorry for. And God was there with his Law condemning you, pounding you into the ground like a nail, binding the conscience so tight that you felt like you might succumb to the pressure. And God was there with his Gospel, that sweet salve of salvation, reminding you of your sins forgiven and your home prepared with him. He was there

reminding you that he had done it already, that he had saved you from sin long ago, that he had given you peace and pardon every day.

God was there at the table every time you approached it. There in bread and wine God reassured you that you are his. There, with his body and blood he guaranteed your forgiveness once more. And it was there that God reminded you that he has healed you and your sin-sick soul.

God has been there this past year, and for countless years before. He has been our dwelling place, our refuge and our strength, our shield, and our very great reward.



...Today

²² Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart. ²³ For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

²⁴ For,

“All people are like grass,
and all their glory is like the flowers of the field;
the grass withers and the flowers fall,
²⁵ but the word of the Lord endures forever.”

And this is the word that was preached to you.

– 1 Peter 1:22,23

Living in the past is futile. Nothing we can do can possibly change what has been done. No amount of guilt, effort, or pleading can make a difference in what has happened in latter years. Which means we should focus on today.

That’s a very Scriptural outlook on life. Jesus encourages us in the great sermon that worrying and fretting has no place in a Christian’s life. Why worry? Why fret? Why think about tomorrow or yesterday. Today has enough problems of its own.

It’s true. The main problem that exists is you. You see, no matter how hard you try, no matter how many good things you’ve done, no matter how much effort you put in your sinful life will always be there. It has been in the past. That’s why mistakes and problems and sins happened. That’s why relationships were damaged, feelings were hurt, and friends were lost. That’s why you faced trouble and hardship. It’s also why life will continue to be hard. No amount of resolutions or resolve will help you avoid your sinful nature this coming year. And so we focus on today. What can you do today? Where can you walk with the Lord today? What can you say, think, or do today? How can you obey the truth, have sincere love, love deeply, love from the heart?

That’s a simple answer: not by what you do. It’s been done for you. You were born again. You were washed by the waters of baptism. A new life was created in you. A new life lives in you. A new life works in you. And that life is there every day. That new life enables you to work to God’s glory. It enables you

to do acts of service that look pure in the eyes of God. That new life leads you to obey the truth, to have sincere love, love deeply, and love from the heart. That new life saves you.

So dear Christian, focus on today. Focus on what God has done for you. Taste his forgiveness tonight. Celebrate his love this evening. And welcome not a new year tomorrow, but a new day. A new day to live for him!



...Forever

¹ "Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness
and who seek the LORD:

³ The LORD will surely comfort Zion
and will look with compassion on all her ruins;
he will make her deserts like Eden,
her wastelands like the garden of the Lord.
Joy and gladness will be found in her,
thanksgiving and the sound of singing.

⁴ "Listen to me, my people;
hear me, my nation:
Instruction will go out from me;
my justice will become a light to the nations.

⁵ My righteousness draws near speedily,
my salvation is on the way,
and my arm will bring justice to the nations.

The islands will look to me
and wait in hope for my arm.

⁶ Lift up your eyes to the heavens,
look at the earth beneath;
the heavens will vanish like smoke,
the earth will wear out like a garment
and its inhabitants die like flies.

But my salvation will last forever,
my righteousness will never fail.

– Isaiah 51:1a, 3-6

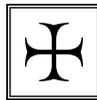
For a Christian, the celebration of New Years' is so much more than some bubbly, games, and a rousing rendition of *Auld Lang Syne*. For Christians we celebrate another year of God's grace. We celebrate another year for the Lord to build his church. We celebrate another year for God to draw more souls to heaven. We celebrate because he gives us reason to celebrate. A new year is on the horizon. New opportunities. New blessings. And changes are coming—good and bad.

You may lose your job. You may lose a loved one. You may lose your house, your car, that knick-knack, or that heirloom. The Lord may lead your life somewhere new. The Lord may bring someone from your past back. But things will change. You'll get older, you're children will grow, your life will change.

And your reaction to change will certainly show what the state of your heart looks like. Will you trust in the God who has been there every year before? Will you look to other people, to self-help books, to earthly philosophies, or worldly wisdom?

Despite the many changes that are in store for you in 2015, one thing will not change. One thing will not fade. God's love for you in Christ. A home will still be waiting for you in heaven. Sins will still be forgiven. The waters of baptism will still create faith. And the body and blood of Christ in, with, and under the bread and the wine will still forgive. The church will still stand. And God will still reign.

Take courage, dear Christian. Many changes may be coming. The unknown is on the horizon. But put your trust in your Lord. Look to him for guidance. Look to him for help. Look to him in thanks. Look to him in trouble. Look to him because he will always be there. Your Lord, Jesus Christ, stays the same yesterday, today, and forever. Amen.



Soli Deo Gloria!

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