

A New Year

After Thoughts: Part 1 “A New Year”

Rev. Cameron D St.Michael – January 1st, 2023

New Year’s Day

Readings: Ecclesiastes 3:1-13; Revelation 21:1-6a; Matthew 25:31-46

Reflection: Psalm 8

Greeting: He will be great and called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father. He will rule over Jacob’s house forever. And there will be no end to his kingdom. Praise the Lord! (*Luke 1:32-33*)

Prayer: Lord, we pray you will be with us as we enter into a new year with you. Help us to come together in your love that we may celebrate your wondrous love throughout the year. May your Holy Spirit guide us and lead us in your holiness. We pray that you will help us to remember the birth of your son, our savior, that we may carry that miracle with us throughout the year. May we proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to all, sharing in your peace and love wherever we are. May we learn to love one another as we grow in our love for your, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reflection: Psalm 8

O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger. When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are humans that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor. You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas. O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! (Psalm 8 NRSV)*

We read the words of the 8th Psalm and we hear God’s majesty and glory. We see the beauty of God’s creation all around us. We also hear of God’s great love for his people. As we enter into a new year, how do you plan on celebrating God’s love in your life this year? Have you thought about how you will bring good news to the poor? How do you plan on sharing God’s love with others in the year to come? How can we all join together to celebrate God’s presence in our lives? How can we help others to experience the joy of Christ?

Prayer: O God, help us to carry your love with us throughout the year. May you bless us in our love and peace so that we may share your love and peace with others. May we always remember the birth of your son, our savior, so that we may always remember his teachings. Help us to treat each other with kindness and love. We pray that in this new year you will be with us in our celebration and our sorrow. As we share our joys and our concerns, we ask that you lift us up in your mercy and grace that we may know you are with us in both laughter and tears. May we carry your light forward all the year, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sermon:

Our scripture readings for today come from the New Revised Standard Version Bible. Our first reading for today comes from Ecclesiastes chapter 3 verses 1 through 13.

For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill and a time to heal; a time to break down and a time to build up; a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and a time to dance; a time to throw away stones and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to seek and a time to lose; a time to keep and a time to throw away; a time to tear and a time to sew; a time to keep silent and a time to speak; a time to love and a time to hate; a time for war and a time for peace. What gain have the workers from their toil? I have seen the business that God has given to everyone to be busy with. He has made everything suitable for its time; moreover, he has put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live; moreover, it is God's gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their toil. (Ecclesiastes 3:1-13 NRSV)*

Our next reading for today comes from Revelation chapter 21 verses 1 through 6.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them and be their God; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away." And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. (Revelation 21:1-6a NRSV)*

Our last reading for today comes from Matthew chapter 25 verses 31 through 46.

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and

the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me.' Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'You who are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels, for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and did not take care of you?' Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' And these will go away into eternal punishment but the righteous into eternal life."
 (Matthew 25:31-46 NRSV*)

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

So, we celebrate a new year today. And we celebrate it by looking forward to what God will help us to do in this new year. And in doing so we reflect on the ways that we can change, the ways that we can help others change, and the ways that we can reach out and make a difference. And I think the new year is a great time to think about it because we're coming off of Christmas. And we haven't quite finished the Christmas story yet because we'll be finishing it next week with Epiphany. And so, we have this in between time with some afterthoughts. That Christmas isn't quite over, but Christmas begins to fade as the new year rolls around and we begin to take the tree down. We begin to put all the decorations away until next year and everything gets put up in its boxes and its bins. And I think sometimes we pack up our joy and we file it away until next year as well. Because I think we sometimes forget that it is always the right time to be joyful and to celebrate the birth of our Savior. That Christmas is a launching point to help us to carry through until the next year. And that idea of things being made new and being able to carry forward with the joy that we know is in our readings today. And we start it with Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes is a familiar reading that we have used before and reminds us that there is a time for everything. A time to be born and a time to die. A time to keep silent and a time to speak. It's a time for everything and knowing what time it is. And I think that part of that is knowing that that last line that we have is an important reminder. That we aren't called simply to be unhappy thinking that's what God wants, but we are called to be happy because there's nothing better than to be happy and enjoy ourselves as long as we live. That God's gift is that we should take pleasure in all our toil. That we should find a way to know that God is with us in all of those times. And I think that's something that we can focus on as we think about a new year with a new beginning as a new time to begin to remember that God is with us. And to share the message that God is with us in this something new.

I'm reminded of that idea of God making everything new in our reading from Revelation. I'm using it very symbolically today. That God has the power to renew our lives. We are not bound to have everything follow us forever because God enables us to live life anew, to make all things new again. That we are not shackled by our mistakes. We are not shackled by the outcomes of previous years. That we have hope that God can make all things new and carry us forward into this new year with this new celebration, and that God will always be with us until all things are made new. So how should we act in this new year? What should our goals be as we think about how we want to treat others and to be treated in the year to come? We find that in our gospel reading. Because Christ reminds us of what is truly important. It is in the way that we treat each other. Christ doesn't settle it on the exactness of our beliefs. Christ doesn't even rest things on the preciseness of our faith. Christ seems to rest it on how we show our faith, how we show our love, in the way that we treat each other. That when we express our faith truly, that when we show our love, this is how it is shown. And I think it's interesting that this is a foreshadowing. Because what it tells me is that there's always time to change. That a new year is upon us and it's a perfect time to change. That if there's anything in this list of things that we have not been doing that it is the perfect time to begin finding ways to do them. It is the perfect time for us to be able to look around and see Christ hungry and give him food. It is the perfect time to look around and see Christ thirsty and give him something to drink. It is the perfect time to look around and see Christ as a stranger and welcome him. It is the perfect time to see Christ naked and give him clothing. It is the perfect time to see Christ sick and take care of him. That it is the perfect time to find Christ in prison and visit him. And when do we find Christ as all of these things? We see it in our neighbor. When we see those in need and treat them as we would treat Christ. That we renew our hearts in God's love by opening ourselves up to the love that he offers us. We do it by opening ourselves up to be able to see others and to treat them the way that Christ calls us to treat them. Because Christ tells us that it is never too late to change. It is never too late to begin thinking about the ways that we can bring good news to those in need. It is never too late to change the way that we live and to reach out to be kinder, more loving, more caring, more generous, to be more understanding, and to be more forgiving.

And that was one of my big after thoughts. Having time to think after Christmas, I thought about all the ways that we so often turn from what Christ calls us to do for so many reasons. Maybe we're just not sure what to do next. And so, we hesitate. Maybe we aren't sure if we have the strength to do all that Christ has called us to do. Maybe we don't even know where to begin. That's okay because the important part is that we do begin somewhere. Maybe we've been doing all these things and want to do them more. Maybe we've fallen off and not been doing them nearly as much as we feel we should. The good news is that God always helps us to start again. Because Christ is with us. That is the hope that we carry forward from Christmas. Not that there was a tree full of presents. Not that we eat too many cookies and too much Chex Mix. Not that we got around to watching all of our favorite movies. Though all of those things help us to experience Christmas. What we carry forward is the miracle of our Emmanuel. Because the miracle is that God is with us this day and this hour. Because God is

with us, we can know what time it is. Whether it is a time to gather stones or throw stones, whether it is a time to be silent or a time to speak, we know because God is with us. We may act always knowing that Christ is by our side. That we may act knowing that we are not hindered by our past actions. That we are not beholden to who we may have been because God makes all things new. God renews us in his love and that is part of the miracle of Christmas. Because we too are born anew in Christ. That in his birth death and resurrection he gives us new life so that we may join together to be of one people with no divisions and with no separations. We are one people of one body, redeemed by one blood to serve one God. That Christ is there to help us because Christ is a reminder to us every time that we see anyone that we are reminded of the care that Christ calls us to have for all people. That we are called to love God and to love our neighbors as ourselves and we do that by caring for each other. By feeding those who are hungry, taking care of those who are sick, doing all that we can for the least and the last, for our brothers and sisters, because Christ is with us, and Christ is there for them. And that we may show God's love in the way that we love each other. So, may this be a year of love and forgiveness. May this be a year of grace and mercy. And may this be a year in which you know God is with you every step of the way, so that you may love more deeply, and so that you may give freely. And may we all know God is with us, from this day forth, all the year, and forevermore. Amen.

Prayer of Confession and Pardon: God, you are with us even when we turn away from you. Guide us back into your loving arms. Judge us not by the perfection of our actions but show us mercy and love. We have strayed like lost sheep from your ways, failing both in what we have done and what we have failed to do. Bring us back into your fold that you may guide us and lead us in all things. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us and forgive us. May we walk in your love and trust your ways. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy upon you. May the Lord forgive all your sins and lift you up in love through Jesus Christ our Lord, and by the Holy Spirit keep you in life eternal. Amen.

Offering: If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

Lord's Prayer

Dismissal with Blessing: May we go forth reflecting God's love in our lives as we go forth in the peace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our Current Series – After Thoughts

Our current series is a brief look at transitioning from Christmas into the new year that is upon us. We will reflect on how we carry the hope of Christ forward into the new year and make it a part of our lives every day.

January 1st – *A New Year* – Ecclesiastes 3:1-13; Revelation 21:1-6a; Matthew 25:31-46

January 8th – *The Epiphany* – Isaiah 60:1-6; Ephesians 3:1-12; Matthew 2:1-12

Prayer List

Rev Charliam Renner	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Our Healthcare Workers
Patti Corder and the Greenup Ambulance Crew		Eric Veach	Ed & Verna Titus
Henry Catey	Jake Kiser	Cindy Cisney	Tricia Adkins
Don Stewart	Ronnie Winstead	Lauren Stewart	Phyllis Gabel
Ruth Ann Finley	Tom Finley	Laura Carlen	Rosie Chancellor
Kenny Holmes	Chuck Hogan	Brittany Gilbert	Jeremy Klinger
Phil Hawickhorst	Ray Carr	Jane Williams	Alice Sherwood
Dean Carlen	Ross Matteson	Richard Durham	Carol Miller
Donna Carlen	Emily Blade	Tim Schnauzer	Steve Carlen
Connie Brown	Family of Leroy Kemper	Kyle Lehman	Kathy Hanks
Gary & Mary Winterrowd	Leo Smith	Sue & Bob Smyser	Larry Thompson
Nick & Leana Ochoa	Evelyn Sue Icenogle	Kristen & Zach Morecraft	Greg Williams
Martha Roberts	Charlie & Charlotte Baxter	Paul Schulte	

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