

A SERVICE OF WORSHIP FOR NEW YEAR'S EVE
December 31, 2020

P: Our help is in the name of the LORD;

C: Who made heaven and earth.

P: Sing to the LORD a new song, for He has done marvelous things;

C: His right hand and His holy arm have worked salvation for him.

P: The LORD has made His salvation known;

C: And revealed His righteousness to the nations.

P: He has remembered His love and His faithfulness to the house of Israel;

C All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

P: Let us pray...

C: Lord God, heavenly Father, because You sent your only-begotten Son for our salvation and gave Him the name of Jesus, grant that we may begin the New Year trusting in His saving name and live all our days in His service and praise, to the glory of His holy name, who lives and rules with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

HYMN: "Jesus, Name of Wondrous Love" – Hymn #900

THE ENTRANCE PSALM:

P: The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

C: And we have seen His glory, glory as of the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.

P: Oh sing to the LORD a new song,

C: for He has done marvelous things!

P: His right hand and His holy arm

C: have worked salvation for Him.

P: The LORD has made known His salvation;

C: He has revealed His righteousness in the sight of the nations.

P: He has remembered His steadfast love and faithfulness

C: to the house of Israel.

P: All the ends of the earth have seen

C: the salvation of our God.

ALL: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.

P: The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

C: And we have seen His glory, glory as of the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.

THE READINGS FOR NEW YEAR'S DAY

First Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:16-18

R: From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard Him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in

Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

Second Reading: Colossians 3:3-11

R: For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

Third Reading: Ephesians 4:22-24

R: To put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

HYMN: “*Now Greet the Swiftly Changing Year*” – **Hymn #896**

THE NEWS YEAR’S EVE MESSAGE: “*A New, New Year*” – Psalm 51:10-12

There are some things that it is possible to fix after we have started. If you miss counting a stitch and discover it right away, it isn’t too hard to undo the wrong stitch and then do it right. We can erase a figure we write down in pencil or redo electronically with our computers. But there are other things we can’t fix. We just have to start all over again. If you scorch a cream or cheese sauce, you can’t fix it. You are stuck with the burnt taste. If I put too little seasoning in something, I can add more. But if I put too much in, then I can’t take it out. I have to start all over again. You can’t paint over rotten wood. The wood has to be replaced. You can’t build on a weak foundation—you can, but it will sink and ruin the building.

Jesus talked about that when He stated that you don’t patch an old garment with new fabric. The new fabric will shrink and tear away from the old, making things even worse. He also said that you didn’t put new wine in an old wine skin. The new wine would still ferment, give off gas, and bust a hole in the old skin, which would no longer give. Putting something new and good looking on something old and rotten will not fix things. It only makes things worse.

We approach the New Year. People make their resolutions thinking that the New Year will be a new chance to improve their lives. We know how often those resolutions fail. But why? A perfect example is weight loss. There are hundreds of diet plans out there. People can go on them and amazingly lose the pounds. But they find that losing weight and keeping it off are two different things. They find out that even with a diet plan, they are still the same person who likes to overeat, eat too much of the wrong things, do too little exercise, and eat just out of habit. Without an internal change they can’t make the same old person keep off those pounds. The New Year is only “new” in the sense that we make it so arbitrarily. The end of December and

June are definitely times of significance, because we experience the shortest and longest days of the year. And we know that not only because of the amount of light we see, but the angle of that light and the coldness or warmth that angle causes. But January 1 is the beginning of a New Year because we have just set it that way. It could be February 1 or June 13 or October 22. There is nothing more new about that day than most others except the day off we may have and all the bowl games on TV.

That is what can be wrong about our thoughts about being “new” as people. St. Paul tells us that as Christians we are new. So the idea can be in our minds that as a Christian I should be better, “newer” than I would be otherwise. Yet, even though I have been baptized, even though I go to church, even though I study the Bible, even though I go to the Lord’s Supper, I find that I am still the same old person. I still have my bad habits—I bite my nails, I blame my wife for my frustrations, I rush through things, I eat the wrong things and don’t exercise like I should. And as I get older, it seems like those things get worse. I don’t have the energy I used to have to work at things like I used to, so I more stubbornly hold on to my shortcomings. When you paint a house, you first need to scrape off the old paint. That is a whole lot worse when you do it over old wood. It isn’t just the old paint that has to go, much of the old wood needs replacing. It is like thinking that a new set of clothes will cure me of arthritis, hearing loss, wobbly knees, and acid reflux.

The result is either that I kind of blow it off or I despair because I always fall so short of what I should be. And in our world of comfort, it is so easy to just blow things off. Death is something you think a lot more of if life now is so bad. Years ago and in the Third World, life had been a daily struggle of fighting hunger, hard labor, a drab existence, little stimulation, and discomfort. You think a lot more about death as a way out of it, so it is easy to concentrate on being ready for death—to be a better person. But we can keep our minds off of that in our homes with central heating, our full refrigerators, our TV’s and books, our free time, and our ability to travel without having to walk it ourselves. So, I just live in the same, old way.

But when God speaks about new, He is not talking about a new coat of paint or a simple attitude change. In the language of the Bible “new” is something God creates. “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.” “Create” involves starting with nothing. You don’t reshape something that is already there. God created the word without anything. He just spoke and it happened. So if we are really to be new, it is not a matter of what we adjust, but what God says.

The God who said, “Let there be,” and there was light or land or sky or trees or animals is also the God who said, “Let there be,” and it was in Jesus. Jesus on the cross said, “It is finished,” and so was His mission of taking away our sins. In Jesus, God says, “Your sins are forgiven. You are new.”

But do we feel “new”? I still have the same aging body, the body I have misused by overeating and lack of exercise and sleep. I still have the same old bad habits. I am still the same person who frustrates those close to me. I am still the same person who has seen loved ones lost and miss them. What is “new” about that?

In Jesus, God did not create me to be a different person, a perfect person. I am still the same person with the same weaknesses, same problems, same sins. But the difference is now my relationship with God. Instead of being cut off from Him in rebelling, I am accepted and forgiven by Him. So instead of having to run away from Him as Adam and Eve did or ignoring

Him as we often do, we can come to Him. That is what makes us new. It is like a marriage. A person doesn't magically change when the pastor says, "I pronounce you husband and wife." But that person is part of a new relationship. And that relationship does make a person change. But before that comes that relationship.

Think of how we can be helped by a relationship with a person who is good to us. But even then no one just shares good with us. We are all sinners. But in a relationship with God, we only receive what is good for us. Think of what that acceptance can mean. We meet a celebrity like a star athlete or heroic leader. That can be a renewing, positive experience, How much better can it be to meet God. If someone important accepts us, then we feel more accepted. How much better to be accepted by God. Someone befriends us. We feel worthwhile. How much more worthwhile when we have Jesus as our brother.

So what makes things new is not what we say about or what we do, but what God creates in us because we are accepted by Him. His forgiveness and acceptance makes us more forgiving and accepting, but we don't look to what happens in us to be renewed. We look to the one who accepts and renews us.

We don't need a New Year to do that. God wants to come to us new each day—new each moment. In a relationship you don't just say, "I love you," and that is that. You say it again and again in many ways—hugs, gifts, compliments, words of encouragement. That is what God does to us in Baptism, Holy Communion, confession and forgiveness, the study of His Word, and being with other Christians. In response we say, "I love You," back to Him by doing those things for others.

THE CONFESSION OF FAITH

C: I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold and silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.

THE CONFESSION OF SINS

C: Lord, we confess that our old nature is decaying in sin. We dwell on past mistakes instead of learning from them. We hold grudges instead of forgiving and forgetting. We boast of our past accomplishments and use them as an excuse to not move forward in faith. We prevent future success by complaining of past failure. We revert to our old ways of sinning, forsaking the new life you have given to us.

P: God has made a new covenant with us. For the sake of Jesus Christ He has forgiven our iniquity and remembers our sin no more. Our old self has been crucified with Christ. We are now dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let us put off our old nature so that we can be renewed in the spirit of our minds.

C: Let us put on the new person created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

P: Each day God gives us another chance, a new time to put on the new life of forgiveness that we receive in Baptism. As forgiven people we greet each other in the spirit of forgiveness.

THE PRAYERS

P: God of all years and all times, with You one day is as a thousand years;

C: And a thousand years as one day.

P: The heavens and the earth are the work of Your hands. They will perish;

C: But You remain forever.

P: They will grow old like a garment;

C: But You are the same, and all Your years will never end.

P: We thank You for all Your blessings to us this past year, but especially for the gift of salvation we have in Jesus.

C: We thank You for Your great mercies which are new to us each and every morning, especially the new life we have in Christ.

P: We pray for Your blessings on the new year. Grant peace in our world.

C: Give wisdom to the leaders who strive to settle conflicts throughout the world and in our own land. Give understanding to people in our communities so that tensions may be eased in courts, at work, and in schools.

P: Grant prosperity in our lives;

C: Give us good health in the New Year. Help us to appreciate the jobs we have, the warm houses we live in, the good food we eat. Make us grow in our abilities and attitudes that we be better and more cooperative workers.

P: Grant strength to Your Church;

C: Give us faith to grow in our efforts to spread Your word, to better meet the needs of the students at college, to bring up our children in the knowledge of Jesus, to reach into the community, to support not only each other, but Your church throughout the world.

P: Bestow Your love on our families;

C: Give us Your hand of favor as we build better lines of communication between parents and children, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives. Give us the kindness to care about each other, to show patience before anger, willingness before selfishness.

P: Grant us Your mercy with these specific concerns we bring before You...

All this we ask of You, confident in the new life Christ has given to us and thankful to You as we pray the prayer He taught us...

C: Our Father who art in heaven . . .

HYMN: "O Rejoice, Ye Christians, Loudly" – Hymn #897

P: As we begin the New Year in the new life God has given to us, we remember His acts of old;

C: He created the universe. He saved his people, Israel, from Pharaoh and led them through the wilderness. He gave His people a new land flowing with milk and honey and a new city, Jerusalem. He placed his special presence in the temple. He sent His prophets to pave the way for the Messiah. He restored His people from exile. But we especially remember the newborn infant King who came into our world. We remember how Jesus

suffered and died for us. We remember that He rose and lives to make us die to our old sinful self and live anew in baptism. We remember Him as we celebrate the new covenant he gave in his body and blood.

P: On the night when He was betrayed

C: Amen.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE HOLY COMMUNION

THE DISMISSAL

P: We have been buried, therefore, with Christ by Baptism into His death;

C: So that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

P: If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature;

C: The old has passed away, behold, the new has come.

P: We have been called by a new name.

C: Which the mouth of the Lord has given.

P: Let us cast away all the old transgressions which we have committed against God.

C: Let us get ourselves a new heart and a new spirit.

P: Let us live in the new commandment which He has given to us;

C: To love one another as He has loved us

P: Sing to the Lord a new song!

C: Sing to the Lord; bless His name!

P: Behold, He makes all things new!

C: We await the new heaven and new earth which He will make.

THE BENEDICTION

P: Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip us with everything good that we may do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever.

C: Amen.

CLOSING HYMN: “O God, Our Help, in Ages Past” – Hymn #733