

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, January 2, 2024
Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN

“Everything New”

READING: Revelation 21:1-5 -Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” He who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

Well, here we are at the start of a new year. It is my hope and prayer that your Christmas season was a blessed one. I guess we can all take a deep breath and enjoy a slower pace for a few weeks. I don’t know about you, but the last 3-4 weeks have been chocked full of activities, people, services, and more. It was a joy, but I’m glad the days aren’t always that busy.

A new year is upon us. As usual the “clairvoyant” prophets have made their predictions for this year. The tabloids love to print that stuff up. I always find it funny that they don’t print a year-end edition that indicates how accurate last January’s predictions were. I’d sort of appreciate a scoresheet, but of course they won’t do that because people would then realize what a lot of hokum those predictions are.

But we do wonder what this year will bring, don’t we? The presidential election is upon us, and it looks to be a miserable, divisive affair. The war in Ukraine drags on with no end in sight. The Israelis and Palestinians are still at each other’s throats. COVID continues to rear its ugly head. It seems as though 2024 will just be a continuation of 2023 – and maybe so.

But I want us to think along a different path this morning. I want us to look to the Lord and to his Word. I want us to be reminded that the Nativity we just celebrated introduced something new into the lives of humanity. GOD, in his Son Jesus, lived among us. He came like us: small, weak, dependent, vulnerable. He had to grow, learn, work, and survive. He did it all just like us, only without sin. Then he suffered, was crucified, and died – for us. All of that was something new. God in the flesh in order to redeem those in the flesh.

And in our text today we learn that the coming in Bethlehem was just the first of two. Here God declares that he will once again live with his people, in their midst, in joy and peace. He will wipe away EVERY tear. Death, mourning, crying, and pain will be obsolete and gone. He will make EVERYTHING NEW! That is decidedly Good News! Come, Lord Jesus, come!

And here is more Good News: God can already make things new again! Every time we receive his absolution after confessing our sins – God is making us new again. Every time we read or hear his Word – God is making us new again. Every time we love the unlovable, care for those who cannot care for themselves, bring the Gospel to those oppressed by their sins – God is making someone new again. And He doesn’t stop there.

With the help of the Holy Spirit we can make other things new again. We can mend broken relationships with his help. We can forgive those we have aught against. We can seek out the lost, bind up the broken-

hearted, bring peace to the dying, and relief to those hard-pressed. He can make us new again if we will allow him to lead and guide us. God has always been in the business of making things new again.

So may 2024 find you being renewed in faith and love and charity. May you discover some new joys, new pleasures, new friends, and new opportunities to show Jesus to those around you. May our Lord strengthen you in all the ways that matter most. And, whatever this New Year brings your way, may the love of God buoy and protect you. Serve the Lord with joy for he says, "Behold, I am making everything new!" That's his promise. That's our hope. Amen.

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

1) **PASTORS CLASS** will commence this coming Sunday, January 7, from 1:00-3:00 PM in the Board Room. This is a great opportunity for you to review the Faith if it's been some time since you last did so. It's also an opportunity for those who haven't been instructed to learn more about Christianity and the Lutheran understanding of the Word.

2) **THANK YOU** to everyone who helped us gift 54 children, as well as teens and needy adults with Christmas gifts again this year. Your donations brought joy and smiles to many faces!