

A Word on Wednesday from Pastor Tonia

"What Good Can Come from This?" 1/3/24

You meant to do me harm, but God meant it for good. (Gen 50:20)

Happy New Year! We've set our resolutions, how we hope to act and react, what we plan to accomplish, and wishes and dreams and desires for what will come our way in the next 12 months.

Oh yeah, we know what will happen will happen, but we still hope things will go well for us and ours. We will turn over a new leaf, this time we will finish our project, this year will be better, this time our dreams will come true, *please* Lord.

Scripture and stoics address this threshold, give encouragement, direction, and consolation. We make our resolutions, then life happens. To a point it's on us if we keep or break our resolutions, but also, we are reminded - not all things are under our control.

Bobbie Jones, an amateur golfer, gave great guidance to this coin toss when he said, "Golf is the closest game to the game we call life. You get bad breaks from good shots; you get good breaks from, bad shots, but you have to play the ball where it lies."

Such IS life. You can plan, calculate, lay out, then the next step completely takes you by surprise. People plan, God laughs.

We have no idea what the New Year holds. Good or evil. Happy or sad. Accomplishments or failures. Try or don't try. Will we be intrepid or cowardly? Hope springs eternal. Will we, can we hold on to it. Do we have the faith we need to continue when we are not sure to where the path leads?

No one can promise we'll find gold at the end of the rainbow. But "you miss 100 percent of the shots you don't take," as Wayne Gretzky said. Or "You can't score if you don't shoot" or "You can't hit the ball if you don't swing." Or "You will never reap what you do not sow."

"The Lord your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the Lord your God loves you." (Deuteronomy 23:5) Bad things happen in life. We don't want them to, we wish they hadn't, but they did.

We can remind ourselves, or allow another to remind us, we are not alone, God is with us. He is in the midst of this storm, as He was with the disciples on that boat in the stormy sea. After the storm, the rainbow appears, reminding us of God's presence, of His promise to always care for us. Go ahead make the shot, take the job, volunteer for something you want to do, but aren't sure you can. Don't let your fears stop you, take the next step into this new year with confidence, you've got this, and God IS with you. He will never leave you.

As we enter this new year, on some level we know bad things will happen and even though we know and prepare, we are still surprised. Roman Emperor and stoic, Marcus Aurelius buried many children, but instead of giving into the grief, he continued on in service to his empire and to others. He told us and showed us, awful stuff DOES happen, we usually have no control over them, but we always have control over how we react to them.

Remember how Joseph was sold into slavery. Pharaoh promoted him and God used him, to save His people. Even though his brothers plotted evil against him, God turned it into good, in order to preserve the lives of many people who are alive today because of what happened.

May God bless you as you enter into this new year.

Please, pray with me:

Loving Father, thank You. We praise Your Name in all things, trusting both the good and the bad to form us into the people You created us to be. Give us wisdom, patience, and insight when we face difficulties, so we learn from them, and react to them in a way which glorifies You and speaks to Your loving kindness toward Your people.

Amen. Happy New Year.