

# A Word on Wednesday from Pastor Tonia

## "Welcome, New Year" 12/27/23

*You crown the year with Your bounty,  
and Your carts overflow with abundance. (Psalm 65:11)*

2023 is coming to an end. For this new year, let these words of God's blessing, be an encouragement and give us hope and trust in God's abundance. We may have made a good dent in our "This year I'll do-list. Then and again, maybe we didn't. But we can't stop time, even though we try. Have we let God down? Is God frustrated with us, upset with our procrastination, or has He thrown in the towel as He watches us fall short again? No. God loves us, we can turn from Him or refuse to believe or to have faith, but we cannot change the character of God.

God loves us so much He sent His only begotten Son. There is no better time than now to remember or to focus on this, as we start anew in 2024. For God is always at work, bringing forth new things and making a way for us even in the most challenging circumstances. Let us open our hearts to realize and embrace the new things He is doing in our lives.

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. (1 Peter 1:3)* A new year and a new you, one with a living hope in Jesus. The days go by, things seem to change, we face new challenges, we make plans and lists, and then reality hits us like a 2 x 4. We can't keep up, let alone accomplish. The goals we set a year ago, the projects, the hope to's, still remain unaccomplished on our resolution list. We still have weight to lose, the fence is not yet done, the boxes are still full, the old clothes made it to the bag, but not to Project Hope, the books still haven't been packed, the room's a mess, the trip is still a dream, the new language unlearned, and I still can't cook. Into what makes us feel like a failure, Paul says, *Anyone who belongs to Christ is a new person. The past is forgotten, and everything is new. (II Cor 5:17)*

The Stoic, Epictetus asked, "How long are you going to wait before you demand the best for yourself?" Good question. When will we take ourselves seriously and do what is best for ourselves? God asks us to look and see, for now, He is doing a new thing. Will we just look and take it in. *See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? [Isaiah 43:19]* God has never, nor will He ever leave us. God has the best possible plan for our lives. God is at work in our planning and in the carrying out of our dreams and desires. Look to God for direction, for what will benefit us, and for what will be the best way serve Him.

Marcus Aurelius, Roman Emperor and stoic, tells himself to stop hoping and "be his own savior while he can." This is a worthy goal, to be the best we can be. Paul tells the Corinthians, if anyone is IN Christ, they are new, the old self is gone, it is dead, we are now a new being. Christ is the savior who has come, we are forgiven, we think and dream differently. We don't hope to be better, we no longer view life as we once did, we are different. Praise God the old selfish self is gone, and we are free to be the person God created us to be. He wrote: *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!* [2 Cor 5:17]

This is a new year, we have been, or we can be, transformed by Christ. We have been freed from sin, we have a new opportunity to serve and glorify God. We walk in the fullness of our new identity in Christ.

What wonderful advice as we face a new year, what guidance as we set our New Year's resolutions. Because we know, in the *Lord's great love, we are not consumed, for His compassions never fails. They are new every morning; great is God's faithfulness.* (Lam 3:22-23) Every new year, every new day, God is faithful.

Let us take hold of the gift of God's Son as we make 2024 the best year yet. Take hold of the promises of God. He will never fail you, with Him you will never walk alone. He comes to you to comfort, to guide, to strengthen and to make all things new. It will probably not be easy, we will face failure, losses, tough decisions, we will be challenged more often than we want. But we will become stronger, more faithful, more resilient, better. We will be made new in the image of the Savior, Jesus the Christ.

## **Let us pray:**

God, we give to You this new year. We give You thanks for Your love and we trust in Your provision for the year ahead. Help us to look to You, to follow as You lead. To rejoice in Your presence. To love and serve You in all we do and in all we are. To hold on to the hope we have in You and in Your Son. Thank You for Your faithfulness to us.

**Amen. Happy New Year.**