

A Word on Wednesday from Pastor Tonia

"RING IN THE NEW YEAR" 12/28/22

*You crown the year with Your goodness;
Your ways overflow with plenty (Psalm 65:11)*

Regardless of what we will encounter in the future, good or bad, and no matter how long or short our earthly future is, we prepare to enter the New Year, confident of God's goodness, knowing His ways overflow with plenty. What a wonderful way to face the blank squares on our new calendar, the empty pages of our to-do lists.

Time flies, just yesterday we were preparing for 2022, today we're about to enter 2023. We look in the mirror – in shock. When did my hair turn gray? Where did those wrinkles come from? How do I turn back the clock? We try to hide the proof of our years, we dye our hair or wear a hat, we try creams or surgery to hide our "laugh lines." But really, they are just a sign of having lived life. It shows someone has been tested, been seasoned, faced trials, and lived. Gray hair is not a sign of bad genes.

In Proverbs we are told, "Gray hair is a crown of splendor;" (Prov 16:31) And then, "We admire the strength of youth and respect the gray hair of age." (Prov 20:29). We earn each and every one of them. The lines on our faces are a map of what we've faced and of what we've accomplished. Respect who you've become.

The year is an empty book. We face a blank slate – what will we write? How will we fill in the little squares of our calendar? Of what will Alexa remind us to do today?

As we face this new year, we wonder: What will it hold? Where will we go, what will we do? What will go well? What will surprise us? We don't know what next year will bring. This IS "good news – bad news," but again it is still true, we – do not know.

So how do we face this blank slate? We ask the Holy Spirit to guide us. We pray for His wisdom, His strength. We pray we face each new day with God's grace, holding on to our faith, and being who we were created to be. We give it to God, because He crowns the year with His goodness, HIS ways overflow with plenty.

It's a New Year. We resolve to eat well, to visit the doctor, to visit the hairdresser, to care for ourselves, to exercise our minds and our bodies. We resolve to care for our spiritual selves and plan to go to church. We write it down on our new calendars. It leaves us frustrated when we don't fulfill our resolutions, but life happens – no matter how careful or prepared we try to be. My, for what it's worth, advice on this is – don't beat yourself up, but also, don't give up. Doing something for yourself – is a good thing. Take care of your physical, mental, and spiritual self – it all needs your attention.

The old year is gone, let it go. Let go of what stops you from living your life, from being who God created you to be. This is a new year, another chance. Let go of feuds and anger, choose to react by taking a different path. Treat others with love, seek the common good. Let go of selfishness, see the worth of others. Choose to follow God's way. Be free to love and serve your neighbors. Walk out of the darkness, let the light of Christ shine in and through you this New Year.

Please pray with me. Lord of the new year, help us to live the way we should, as we enter each new day. Give us wisdom so we will see Your plan. Give us compassion so we will love our neighbors. Give us strength and courage to serve those in need. The year ahead is empty, help us to fill it with good things. Thank You for this new year, may we appreciate each day and give thanks for the joy and blessings it brings.

Amen. Blessings on your New Year.