

God Gives the Fresh Start

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Separation; Reunion; God's Love / Romans 8:31-39

- › Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

I went back to my sermon for last New Year's Eve which I preached on this same text and I said this towards the end of the message:

Even though as 2019 is about to be memory, we look back and see the challenges, we see the tribulations. We need not despair. Now as we look forward to 2020, we know that we will have challenges, troubles, and tribulations ahead of us, but yet we need not despair. The bonds of love between Christ and us cannot be broken.

The same is true for 2020 and 2021. 2020 is about to be a mere memory. And for many of us we say Thank God. It's been a difficult year in many ways. We look back and we see the challenges, we see the trials, the tribulations. And as we look back the big glaring trials that we see is Covid and Political Unrest. We've all had our own trials and tribulations. The ones that are very personal and sometimes very private. Maybe it was a health issue that is not Covid related. Maybe a loved one died during the last year. Maybe a relationship that you cherished was broken.

As you look back at 2020, please look for the bright spots as well. I wrote in my newsletter article how we welcomed Naomi into our family and into the family of faith. I was able to attend and officiate my sisters wedding. These were very bright spots of this year. These are memories that I will never forget, and Covid even helped both of them be even more special. Who would think, Covid was a positive on something.

As we are now looking directly into 2021, the thought of today is that God is the one that gives us a fresh start. As the months of 2020 dragged on and 2021 was

coming closer we were thinking, we can't wait till 2021, it'll be a fresh start. Frankly, 2021 can be a fresh start. It's time for something new. And tonight as we gaze ahead into 2021, He is giving us a fresh start.

So how in the world does God do this? Look at our text:

Lutheran Service Book Three Year Lectionary 12-31-2020: New Year's Eve

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? 33 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

What is God saying here through St. Paul? Your fresh start isn't because the calendar year changes. Your fresh start came a long time ago. It came when God sent forth His Son. He did not spare His own Son but gave him up for us all. He came up for death...and Christ Jesus died, but more than that was raised and he continues to be interceding for us, for you.

Your fresh start began in the womb of Mary, continued at a stable in Bethlehem, moved to an Upper Room in Jerusalem and then to a cross outside the city, to a tomb in a Garden and then to the joyous encounter that showed God is giving you a fresh start when Jesus walked out of the tomb alive and proclaimed that very fact to many.

Your fresh start continued to happen when you were baptized, and it happens every time you confess your sins and receive absolution. It continues each and every time you come and eat of the body and drink of the blood of our Lord at His table. Your fresh start happens in the forgiveness of sins won for you by Christ Jesus.

Then Paul asks the question:

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35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? 36 As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

He doesn't just ask this question, he also gives us the answer.

Lutheran Service Book Three Year Lectionary 12-31-2020: New Year's Eve

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul is clear...nothing can separate you from God's love. Nothing in all of creation...whether that be life or death, whether it be disease or depression, whether it be covid or cancer, whether it be government shut-down or mask mandate, whether it be financial struggles or family struggles, whether it be what has happened in the past year, what happens today, or what will happen tomorrow and into the future. Nothing can separate you from God's love.

His love gives you a fresh start. His action of love gives you the fresh start.

Are we looking for a fresh start in 2021...absolutely. Are we hoping things are better in 2021...absolutely. Are we hoping that physical distancing and masking ends in 2021...absolutely. You also have your own personal hopes for 2021...you do each and every year. That doesn't change. This year that is going by is one that we will always remember...not for the good, but for the struggles. As we look ahead as God gives you a fresh start again tonight through the forgiveness of sins, take that forgiveness into the New Year.

Take the mercy of God into the New Year. It's there in the New Year, it's there each and every day. With God you are conquerors, with God you get a fresh start.

Will 2021 have its own troubles? Absolutely. IT will because we live in this sinful and fallen world. No matter what trouble or tribulation, distress or persecution,

famine or nakedness, danger or sword - God's grace is for you! I can't predict what will happen in 2021 nor do I want to, but the one thing that I do know is that God gives you a fresh start for the New Year.

Again hear those words that give you a fresh start:

As a called and ordained servant of God, I announce God's grace to you, in the stead and by the command of God, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Being forgiven children of God, put the troubles of the past behind you. Look to the future with God's grace. Maybe your relationships have been harmed in the past year, by political differences or even differences on Covid...reach out to those and seek reconciliation and peace. Maybe you haven't loved your neighbor as you should this past year, you have a new year of grace. God gives you a fresh start.

Thank God for the fresh starts that He gives to you and to me. Quite frankly these fresh starts don't just happen once every 365 days, it happens each and every morning...his mercies are new every morning. So tomorrow morning, January 1, is a fresh start and so is January 2, 3, etc...even up to December 31, 2021 and every day in between.

Tonight as we say Good Bye to 2020 and in the morning when we welcome 2021, Give God thanks for another year of grace, another day of grace because of Christ Jesus who died and was raised.

May God Bless you this night and into the New Year.

In the name of Jesus. Amen.

- › Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior, who gives to you a fresh start. Amen.