This Is My Year

Welcome, good morning to all of you. We’re starting a brand-new year, worshiping together, celebrating the potential of this new decade before us. And so, we want to adopt the mindset, out with the old and in with the new, seizing this opportunity to reflect and be transformed by the renewing of our minds. And so, I’d like to ask how many of you at some point in this past year have been disappointed by your behavior? In other words, you didn’t like the way you acted, and you’re dissatisfied with yourself. How many of you would say you could have done better? Would you just raise your hand if that’s you?

Now, I don’t know what that is for you, but maybe it’s your attitude, maybe it’s a lack of patience with others and you find yourself yelling when you shouldn’t. You know, just taking out your frustration, being harsh with the people that you love the most. Or maybe you’re just overly critical, you’re tearing down the very people that you’re supposed to be building up, and you’ve seen the pain and the hurt in their eyes. And so today, as you consider your life, you’re trying to represent Christ, you’re trying to be faithful to him, but you recognize that you keep doing things that are not very Christlike.

And I’ll tell you, I often find myself dissatisfied and discouraged by my own behavior and I think, “I need to try harder or I need to be better.” Sometimes people will say and maybe use said this too, “Well, I just need to be more religious.” You know, praying more, reading the Bible more, attending church more faithfully, and while those are all very good things, it’s getting the wagon in front of the horse, or the trailer in front of the lawn tractor so to speak. Because seeking to change your behavior and becoming more moral may make you a nicer person on the outside, but only Jesus can change your heart, only Jesus can make lasting change, changing who you really are. And so, you can try very hard to be good, to be more religious, and that may make you nice on the surface, but only Jesus can make a new you.

Now, some of you may have read your Bible and looked at Jesus from a worldly point of view. You know, you thought of him as a good man, a great teacher, a charismatic leader, a miracle worker who did some really cool things, but the apostle Paul tells us in second Corinthians chapter 5 that we should know him differently. That we should know him on a deeper, more personal, life transforming level. He says in verse 16,

*“From now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5:16-17).*

Notice that he says, if anyone is in Christ; he doesn’t just say if anyone believes in Christ. And so, he’s saying, if anyone belongs to Christ, if they’re fully surrendered to Christ, they’re not just better, they’re brand-new. The old is gone and the new has come, they’re a new person, because they’re in Christ. They’re not just better, not just trying harder, but everything is new by the power of the Holy Spirit through the Lord Jesus Christ.

I’m believing that for many of you, this year’s going to be different, and you’re going to be able to say with confidence, “This Is My Year.” In spite of all the obstacles, difficulties, and challenges that are certain to come your way, you’re going to pass through this new year, number one, moving forward with a deeper level of commitment and a greater resolve to walk continually in Christ Jesus.

**1. Moving Forward**

You see, every one of us has a story that God wants to use for his glory and in Christ Jesus he’s given us everything we need. You and I can boldly step out proclaiming that this is my year knowing that God is with you and he’s gone before you, but that doesn’t mean that it’s going to be easy. In fact, for many of us we’re entering this new year having lost something. For some of us it was a loved one, a friendship, a job, a home, or a dream, and it’s in the context of loss as we turn to the Word of God that we find God calling Joshua to cross over into the promised land.

In Joshua chapter 1, God calls him to lead the people of God, crossing over into something new, much like we are crossing into this new year, into a new decade, and verse one says,

*“After the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua…. "Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them… I will give you every place where you set your foot, just as I promised Moses… As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Joshua 1:1-3, 5).*

In other words, God says Moses is gone, you can’t get him back, what’s in the past is in the past, but if you’ll fix your eyes on me, on my plans for you, if you’ll just move forward, he promises, as I was with Moses, so I’ll be with you. Even though you don’t know where you’re going, he says, just as I led Moses, I’ll lead you. And so, he encourages his people to keep moving forward, keeping their eyes on him, and he gives them a command with a promise in verse nine. God told Joshua,

*“Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9).*

I believe this is a beacon call to faith for everyone who believes, so that whatever challenges there might be this year, you can step into it with anticipation, moving forward, looking neither to the right nor the left, because you know that every challenge is an opportunity for God to lead you into his glorious future. And so today, as we’ve crossed over the threshold into this new year, we need to move forward, but it takes a certain kind of faith. Hebrews chapter 11 says that kind of faith is *“being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we don’t see” (Hebrews 11:1)*.

It’s a faith that hopes for what’s ahead, forgetting what’s behind, and moving forward it looks out on the horizon. That’s why Hebrews chapter 12 tells us to,

*“Fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith…” (Hebrews 12:2).*

Because we can trust that whatever is ahead of us, that Jesus wrote it, and so we can look forward to the next chapter. We can lean into it with anticipation, with the expectation, because we know that he’s the author and perfecter of our faith. And so, we follow his example, looking ahead, leaning into what’s before us because the Bible says that Jesus…

*“For the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame…” (Hebrews 12:2).*

It was before him and today you and I don’t want to make the mistake of letting what’s behind us cause us to miss what’s before us.

Joshua was looking across the Jordan River at the Promised Land. Behind him were 40 wasted years, but he had the faith to look forward to the joy set before him. In the same way, you and I today, our faith isn’t just looking forward to heaven, it’s looking forward to the joy set before us. Now, I know there are going to be some unexpected challenges, there are going to be some things that we’d rather not face, but faith keeps us moving forward. We can step out with confidence, knowing that this is my year, being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. And so, number one, we want to keep moving forward, and then number two, we want to remain standing.

**2. Remaining Standing**

In Joshua chapter 3, Joshua told the people of God as they were standing there on the shore of the Jordan River, as they were looking at this great obstacle before them, he said,

*“When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God and the priests… carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it” (Joshua 3:3).*

And so, Joshua tells them to fix their eyes on the ark out in front of them, not getting stuck where they were, not being satisfied with just experiencing God on this level but moving forward with expectation. With their eyes on the ark before them, they followed it into the river remembering what Joshua had told them in verse five,

*“Tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you" (Joshua 3:5).*

As you and I stand on the edge of a new year, we need a faith like that, a faith that looks forward, that looks ahead, and even looks beyond. That’s the context of this passage as Joshua prepares the people of God to overcome every stumbling block and as they’re moving forward God performs this great miracle. Verse 15 tells us that,

*“As soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water's edge, the water from upstream stopped flowing…” (Joshua 3:15-16).*

And so, the priests went out before the people, walking into the middle of the Jordan, and they stood there until all the people had crossed over. The Bible tells us in Joshua chapter 4, verse 10, that the priests who carried the ark…

*“Remained standing in the middle of the Jordan until everything the Lord had commanded Joshua was done by the people…” (Joshua 4:10).*

This is so practical because this describes what some of us had to do this past year. In fact, some of you are still standing in the middle of that impossibility, that seemingly impassable situation, you’re still carrying what God put on your shoulders, but he’s faithful, he didn’t leave you nor forsake you, and even though you may not have gotten everything right last year, the one thing that you did right is that you remained standing. And for some of you that’s why you came to church this morning, because you want to give all the praise and glory to Christ who strengthened you, who was your focal point and your perspective though it all.

In fact, one thing I want to draw your attention to, I think it’s important that I point this out, and that is that the ark remained in the middle. I don’t want you to miss the significance of this truth, and so I want to tell you a little bit about the ark. The Bible tells us that the ark was a rectangular chest that contained the two stone tablets containing the 10 Commandments. Now, this chest had a lid on it, with these angels called cherubim that were made of gold and were positioned at each end of the cover. When God was describing to Moses how to build the ark in Exodus chapter 25, he said,

*“There above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the Testimony I will meet with you” (Exodus 25:22).*

This is so important, because there are some of you here today who’ve remained standing and you need to know that God wants to meet you right there in the middle. Some of you have stood in the middle of some deep stuff this year, in the middle of some dysfunction, in the middle of some dark situations, and yet you remained standing. You see, it’s not just about how you started, it’s not just about crossing to the other side, but the miracle is when you stand in the middle of what could’ve drowned you, what could’ve washed over you, what threatened to swallowed you up and yet didn’t. And so, as you’re moving forward, God will meet you there in the middle, and as you remain standing, number three, the Bible tells us that he makes all things new.

**3. Makes All Things New**

That’s the miracle, that’s the good news, that even though God accepts you as you are, he’ll never leave you as you are. In Christ, God makes all things new, and this is so important because you want to remain standing and yet some of you ended the year in a stalemate. There are some of you right now who’ve hit a place in your life where you’re at a dead end. In fact, you may not even see any way to get through what you’re facing, but that’s exactly the type of situation where God reveals himself. In Isaiah chapter 43 he said,

*“See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland” (Isaiah 43:19).*

Some of you right now need a new thing, maybe in your faith, in a relationship, in your finances, or in your body, you know, you need a healing. And I’m here to tell you that we serve a God who makes a way when we can’t see a way. When no one else can see it, God says, “See, I am doing a new thing.” When we can’t see a door, we serve a God who can make a door. You see, we serve a God who can make a way when there is no way.

I love that, this makes me excited, because I believe in the power of God, I believe in the resurrection, I believe he’s the God of the impossible. And so, if you’ll believe in resurrection power, if you’ll declare resurrection power over that improbability, over that impossibility, there won’t be anything wasted, because nothing is over, nothing is finished if God’s in it. He’s making all things new, the potential is there, because he’s a God of miracles.

In fact, there may be some things in your life this morning that seem like they’re dead, they may even have been buried, but our God is a grave robber. We need to remember that it’s not over until he says it’s over. And so, that relationship, that dream, that whatever, still has potential because of God’s faithfulness. Some of us need to revisit the empty grave where they buried Jesus because he was the firstborn among many brothers. The apostle Paul tells it to us this way in Romans chapter 8,

*“We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified” (Romans 8:28-30).*

You see, Jesus left the glory of heaven, he came down to earth, and he went to the grave, but he didn’t stay there, because he was raised in power. I’m believing there are some of you here today that God is resurrecting something in you, he’s making something new, and I’m believing in new beginnings today. You see, what God was doing in Christ when he planted him in the grave was a new thing because after three days he rose again. His body was planted and the Bible tells us that the seed that was sown was perishable, but it was raised imperishable, it was sown in dishonor, but it was raised in glory, it was sown in weakness, but it was raised in power (1 Corinthians 15:42-43).

And so, after three days he rose again, he’s alive, he’s risen, he’s with us, and he’s making all things new. The Bible tells us in Colossians chapter 1 that God has chosen to make known the glorious riches of what the Holy Spirit calls a mystery which is,

*“Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27).*

I want you to know that there still is potential, we may not understand everything, but we’re moving forward, and some of us are standing in the middle of some stuff testifying to the miraculous power of God to make all things new. It’s not just trying to move forward, it’s not trying to remain standing, but it’s God meeting you in the middle and through Christ he’s making all things new. And so, you and I can say with confidence, this is my year, because it’s not by our power, it’s not by our strength, but it’s by his Spirit.

Pastor John Talcott

Christ’s Community Church

303 West Lincoln Avenue

Emmitsburg, MD 21727

January 5, 2020

(301) 447-4224

[www.cccaog.org](http://www.cccaog.org)

*Graphics, notes, and commentary from LifeChurch, Ministry Pass, PC Study Bible, Preaching Library, and Sermon Central. Scripture from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.*