

Jan 3 10 Revelation 21:1-5 First Sunday Com

GETTING RID OF THE OLD, PUTTING ON THE NEW

There is one thing that we know will happen on this earth as long as we live here, and that is, there will be a new year. Between the last day of the old and the first day of a new year it's "out with old, and in with the new." We ring out the old by saying goodbye and we ring in the new with horns, noise makers, kissing someone we love, by enjoying entertainment and celebrating. Every year people gather in Springfield and many other cities to ring in the New Year with shows, parades, fireworks and live entertainment. Millions of people gather in Times Square from all over the world to watch this event. One person said they had been standing there at a good spot for over 9 hours...in the cold...in the drizzle...in the snow showers...in the frigid cold. Why I even saw some nut with no shirt on with "2010" written across his chest. On this day people do some weird things and dress weirdly. Many of us older ones watch on TV. We welcome the New Year in by Eastern Standard Time and celebrate the New Year as the ball touches down in Times Square and we hear the traditional "Auld Lang Sine." Then a little past 11 we old folks then can hit the hay. Or some stay till midnight anyway to welcome a new born baby called 2010. We watched the other night and they interviewed people from California, Hawaii, Australia and even the United States. At the stroke

Of midnight when the ball finished falling one man proposed to his girl friend in front of the whole world. I kissed Carole and wished her a Happy New Year and we then gathered up our stuff and off to bed we went thinking how we are entering a new decade and praying God's blessing on us for peace and health.

Newness! We like newness. Sometimes people clean out closets, especially around this time of year because it's out with the old fashions, and in with the new. And if we are honest, most of those clothes in our closets won't fit any too soon, though we hope and pray and try to exercise those pounds away so we can force ourselves into them. But, in the end, the old style just will not be good enough...or we will just give up our diet.

Newness! That is what some people strive for. We promise to get rid of bad habits and begin new good ones. Some try quitting smoking at this time, or eating stuff you aren't suppose to have, hoping to lose a couple of pounds. Even stores tell us newness is good as they put on big sales hoping to entice you to get rid of the old and put on the new. Car dealers do the same. Why drive around in that old car when you can drive around in a new fuel efficient one today? Out with the old, in with the new.

This morning we turn to the very last book in the Bible to the next to last Chapter to find words of hope and words of newness from our Lord and Savior as

We have entered a new year. Hear now God's word for God's people. May you find this morning that which you have asked our Father in heaven, hopefully, Lord makes me new. Help me get rid of the old and put on the new. **READ REV. 21-1-5**

I want to take just a few minutes to speak about a new year using this passage.

You see, in this passage God talks about newness of life.

First, we notice that Jesus talks about **a new city**. If you have ever been to a Celebration of Life I've officiated at you will remember this is the Scripture I always close with before I begin my sermon. The reason I do that is because this is the hope that we as Christians look forward to. Just as the Hebrew nation looked forward to a new city of Jerusalem not made with human hands, but the hands of God, we too, look forward with hope to a new place where the old things will be gone and the new will be there. A city where God himself will rule his people. A place of love and peace where all the old things of this world will be gone.

Second, we notice that several things will be missing from that city. **No more tears, no more sorrow, no more pain, no more sickness**. I could go on and on. This new city will be a place with gold lined streets, where there will be no lights because there will be no more darkness and the sun shall shine all the time. In other words, God is going to take away all the things that make us sad and replace them with all the things that make us happy.

Third thing I want to say is this, **all the things that cause sadness and tears will be gone.** This year we have lost some wonderful people. We've lost Kathryn Wedeking, Paul Lugibill, Sharon Miller, Millie Anderson, RC Smith and Bill Gaither, just to mention a few from our congregation. Others have died as well that most of you know. I lost two friends in ministry this past year as well. So there has been tears and sadness. But then when we think that one day we will see each other in that new city called Jerusalem then those tears turn to joy, for we know eternity is a long, long time and we will be enjoying that in a place where there is no more sadness, nor death, nor separation anymore and we will be together again to enjoy a new a greater life, for God will be the center of it all.

And that brings me to God's promise found from his own lips when he says, "*I am making all things new! These words are trustworthy and true.*"

I love that verse. "I am making all things new." Paul tells us to "put off the old and put on the new." He also tells us to "get rid of the junk in your mind that can lead to sin, and put on the mind of Christ." That's the same thing that Jesus tells us. It's like the snow. Now many of us don't like snow the older we get because it becomes inconvenient. But when we were younger we loved the snow. We would play in the snow, build snowmen, go sledding or skiing or ice skating. Some make money from shoveling snow or plowing snow, so snow has its benefits.

Look at the snow falling and what you see is that it covers things up. It covers the old dirty world with a fresh layer of whiteness. It's like the old has passed away and the new has come. But then when snow stays around awhile it becomes dirty from all the plowing, people walking or playing in it. But then a new snow fall comes and the next thing you know it's pretty outside once again as the snow covered branches and lawns are covered and you can't see the old ugly stuff anymore. All you see is the newness, the whiteness of the pure driven snow. Maybe that's why lots of people like snow. It's clean and refreshing and covers the old stuff.

Well you know our spiritual lives are like that. I'm afraid to say. We have these old sins that have built up in our spiritual lives. Sometimes we cover them up with things. We even try and block them out of our mind. But then that little guy in the red suit with the long tail and nasty laugh brings them back to our memories. We then begin to doubt our salvation. We begin to question our spiritual walk. We wonder if God truly has forgiven us, or if he ever will. We then drift back into our old secular lives and stop reading the Bible or even praying, and may even stop coming to church, or come to church and sleep through the message thinking God can't help you and all this is a waste of time.

This morning I am here to tell you that kind of thinking is all wrong. How do I know that? Because I trust God's word and it clearly states this. **"I AM MAKING ALL THINGS NEW!"** And if that isn't enough for you then look at the next verse that follows because he says, **"IT IS DONE!"**

Do you remember another place that we heard words like that? It was from the cross when Jesus died for our sins. In one of his final statements, in fact we might say it was his last statement when he looked toward heaven after this grueling struggle with the devil and with sin as he took the sins of the whole world, past, present and future upon himself so that all who would believe in him could find forgiveness and eternal life... his parting words were these, "IT IS FINISHED!" Now you might ask what was finished and I would say sin was finished. He defeated it right then and there. Death was finished because three days later when the women went to the tomb the stone would be rolled away and the tomb empty and the angel would ask the women "why are you looking for the living among the dead? For Jesus is alive." The old had passed away and the new had come. That's what he meant. The old ways, the old thinking was now gone and the new thinking, the newness of life through the power of the Holy Spirit had come. For it was finished. The old was done and the new had begun. It was a new way of life living in and through the Spirit of God. Salvation had come. Power had come through the

Spirit of God and God's people had the blessed hope that because he lives we can face our tomorrows with certainty. Why because he has told us so. I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW! IT IS DONE!

So today we walk in the newness of this life that God has given to us. The old is passed away and the newness has come. This morning we see the formula before us in the elements of the bread and wine that reminds us not only of God's love for us. But that in receiving these elements is it is receiving Jesus into our hearts. It's as if he penetrates every aspect of our earthly bodies. It's like he goes right to the heart of our problems, the heart, and opens up those clogged arteries and cleans out the old stuff that has been building up and the next thing you know you are feeling differently, for the old has gone and the new has come.

Though we are a couple of days into the New Year it isn't too late to begin something that will change your life forever. Newness! That's what God offers you today at this Communion table. Let's not just cover up the old but let's let God make all things new in our lives so that we can be at peace, full of joy and full of the assurance that no matter what the man in the red suit throws our way, with Jesus in our lives, we will be okay. We make and break New Year's resolutions each year very quickly. This new year may we just let go and let God. It's not too late to surrender all things to the Master. For even today, he still makes all things

New. May the God who makes all things new transform you today through the body and blood of his son who is offered for you.