

I.N.I.

New Year's Eve
Dec. 31, 2013
Selected texts

In Christ Jesus, the same yesterday, today and throughout everyone of our tomorrow's, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

One of the reasons for worshiping on this last evening of the old year is to take the time to reflect upon the past. We examine our past year's activities, repent of the past year's failures and faithlessness and also rejoice in the past year's blessings. We give thanks to God for His loving protection, guiding hand, forgiveness of sins and rich abundance to us.

This evening we will do something different then having one sermon based on these sentiments just mentioned. Instead we will look back upon the worship services and sermon texts of 2013 and read some of the passages from those texts as well as sing hymns from those various church seasons.

We began with Epiphany Sunday and our sermon text was the familiar lesson of the Wise Men coming to see Jesus. Our theme was: **WHERE IS HE WHO HAS BEEN BORN KING OF THE JEWS?**

I: The WORD still leads us to Him.

II: Many in the world still do not know Him.

III: Many in the world still would do away with Him.

IV: He is found in the hearts of those who still worship Him.

Epiphany means to show forth or manifest. During the Epiphany season we heard sermons based on the lessons of Jesus' life showing Him as God. We learned that Jesus is our Storm-stiller, stilling the storms in our lives and in our faith-life. From Mark 2, the lesson of Jesus healing the paralytic we learned that Jesus gets to the heart of the matter so that the whole body is Healed for He gives us total soul/body care. We read Jesus' words: **Son, your sins are forgiven you. Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'arise, take up your bed and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" -- He said to the paralytic, I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house. Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, "we never saw *anything* like this!"**

In early February little Julia Kathleen Gullerud was reborn into God's Kingdom through baptism. In mid-February we celebrated the Transfiguration of Jesus, where we saw He and His clothes shine as bright as the sun. We learned that one reason for Jesus' transfiguration was to prepare Him for His up-coming Passion---His Suffering and death.

Let us sing Hymn **135**

This past year's mid-week Lenten series pulpit exchange was entitled: **"Passionate Prayers of our Savior."** We began with Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane: **When He came to the place, He said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed, saying, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done."** And we ended with Jesus' prayer from the cross: **And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."**

In our Sunday morning Lenten services we heard from Revelation six important facts about our **Triumphant Savior**. We noted in one of those sermons: "Sometimes we Christians get the feeling that we are losers. That everything we try fails, that we are somehow cursed to fail because we live in a world of sin. Christians can sometimes be the most pessimistic of people. And really that's

shocking! For of all people, Christians should be the **MOST OPTIMISTIC**, confident, content, joy-filled and happy. Why? Because of our **Triumphant Savior.**" The six themes were:

Jesus, the Dragon Slayer

Jesus, the True and Faithful King

Jesus, the Life Giver

Jesus, the Sin Remover

Jesus, the Comforting Shepherd

Jesus, the Curse Eliminator

A quote from our Lenten sermon on Jesus, the Sin Remover: "What alone can remove the spots and stains of sin, what alone can cleanse us from our putrid rags of self-righteousness? What alone can wash us clean from our sin-blackened, pride-filled hearts and the stains of sins in thought, word and deed? Only the cleansing agent of **CHRIST'S SHED BLOOD**. Scripture clearly teaches **WITHOUT THE SHEDDING OF BLOOD THERE IS NO FORGIVENESS.**"

Let us sing Hymn 156

Early on Easter Sunday morning our children reviewed the 6 Scripture references from Revelation with the theme: **THE REVELATION OF OUR TRIUMPHANT SAVIOR!** Our Easter sermon was entitled: **JESUS, THE VICTORIOUS LAMB!**

The text from Revelation 5:9-14 are the words of praise for the Lamb standing in the midst of the throne in heaven: **And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."** Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: **"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!" And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!" Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.**

Let us sing Hymn 198 (1, 4-5)

Offering of our Thankful hearts---Hymn 344

During the six weeks Easter season our sermons were based on the book of Acts and the spread of the Good News of a crucified and risen Savior. Our theme was **THE POWER OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION IN OUR LIVES!**

40 days after Easter we celebrated the Ascension of our Lord and King. We heard our Savior tell His disciples and us: **YOU SHALL BE MY WITNESSES TO THE END OF THE EARTH.**

Ten days later we celebrated Pentecost and the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus' disciples. Our theme based on Matthew 7:24-29 was **CONTINUE TO BUILD YOUR FAITH'S FOUNDATION UPON THE ROCK, JESUS AND HIS WORD.**

We read Matthew 7: **Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."** And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

Let us sing Hymn 477 (1 & 4)

The Sunday after Pentecost we held the Confirmation of James Schaser, preaching on the words of Hebrews 12:1-2, words we just studied this past Sunday in Bible Class. Our theme: **JAMES, RUN WITH PERSEVERANCE THE RACE MARKED OUT FOR YOU.** The Words from God: **Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.**

Our summer Sundays were filled with words from the Apostle Paul's letter to the Romans and then Philippians. Back on June 2nd we said: "Romans is a doctrinal book, but not a dry book of doctrine! This letter and especially our text this morning (Romans 3:21ff) summarizes the doctrine of justification by grace through faith---'the doctrine upon which the Christian Church stands or falls.'" Our theme was: **EVERY SINNER IS DECLARED RIGHTEOUS!**

On August 11th we celebrated our 40th anniversary as a Christian congregation. Our sermon was based on the words of Psalm 100: **Make a joyful shout to the LORD, all you lands! Serve the LORD with gladness; Come before His presence with singing. Know that the LORD, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, And His truth endures to all generations.**

On the last Sunday of September Pastor John Hein proclaimed to us: **IT'S HARVEST TIME** with words based on Matthew 9: **Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. "Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."**

On Reformation Sunday we heard Paul's words from II Corinthians 5:17-21: **Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**

Our theme was: **Got Peace? Yes, we do thru the Great Exchange!**
Let us sing Hymn 774 (1 & 4)

As we approached the end of the Church year we heard from Paul's words to the Philippians that **OUR CITIZENSHIP IS IN HEAVEN!** And the last Sunday of the Church year we heard Jesus encourage us to watchfulness: **Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.**

On the last Thursday of November we gave thanks to our God by reading the Lord's Prayer and also the words of Martin Luther's explanation.

In December Eleanor Marie Horejsh was reborn into God's kingdom through baptism.

In our mid-week Advent services, again a pulpit exchange, we prepared for our Savior's coming by being encouraged to "Make Room for Jesus." The three themes were "A Guest Room" "There is no Room" and "A Waiting Room" based on words from John 14; Luke 2; and Phil. 4.

In our Sunday morning Advent services we were told: **Here He Comes! Prepare! Believe! Rejoice! Behold!** Based on the words of Luke 1---John the Baptist's birth announced to Zacharias; Jesus' birth announced to Mary; Mary's Magnificat; and Zacharias' Benedictus.

And last week our children and narrators asked us the question: **"WHO GETS TO HOLD THE BABY?"** With wonder and awe we heard these words of the angel: **For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.** Then we were told: "The Spirit of God has handed Him to you. He has placed Him into your hearts to forgive all your sins and prepare you for eternal life. He has placed Him into your lives so that you might find joy and comfort beyond expressing. The Baby is yours this day. Look into His eyes and see the eyes of God who humbled Himself so that you could be exalted; look at His little hands and feet and remember what they did for you at Calvary. Look and marvel at how we, poor, simple people, can hold Him, cling to Him, rely on Him, and trust in Him. We ALL get to hold the Baby! He was held by many, so that you could hold unto Him, and He could hold you forever"

We then continued our joy-filled celebration on Christmas morning hearing from Isaiah: **For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end.** What joy!

Let us sing Hymn **87 (1-2)**

What an amazing year of blessings from God's Word. Week after week God came to us in His Word and in His Sacraments of Holy Communion and Baptism. With repentant hearts we approached His altar and received the Good News of sins forgiven through His Son's shed blood and the assurance of everlasting life. We were given the powerful Word to give us the courage and confidence to live for Jesus and glorify His name in all that we thought, said and did this past year and prayerfully for all the years to come until He takes us to be with Him in our heavenly home. Let us close with reading **Hymn 110 (1, 2, 4, 6)**