

I.N.I.

New Year's Eve
Dec. 31, 2010
Col. 3:17; Daniel 2:20-22

In Christ Jesus, the same Yesterday, Today and Forever, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

I'm not much for New Year's resolutions. I like to look forward into the future but since I do not know what the future will bring I let the Lord take care of that. That is one reason why I am not a big worrier. But I do like looking back upon the past. History is one of my favorite subjects. I like reminiscing, reflecting, ruminating on what has happened, sometimes to the point of almost wanting to relive the past; which is not really healthy.

Therefore New Year's Eve is my kind of night, when it is good to take the time to look back upon the past year and reminisce; and as we do that we see so many, many undeserved blessings that it is hard not to be humbled and be led to give thanks. And of course on top of the list of blessings is our Savior-God who walked with us and blessed us every one of those 365 days of 2010.

So tonight we close out the old year and welcome in the new one in the name of our Savior Jesus. How do we do that? Paul tells us **GIVING THANKS TO GOD THE FATHER THROUGH HIM**. This evening we **CLOSE OUT THE OLD YEAR 2010 IN THE NAME OF JESUS:**

I: WITH THANKSGIVING

Our first text this evening clearly tells us that in everything we do, whether it be in word or deed, **DO ALL IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS**. If everything we did or said was done and said in the name of Jesus with thanksgiving in our hearts, what a different life we would have. There would be no more complaining about carrying out the garbage, doing the dishes, changing the diapers, picking up after the kids, fixing that leaky faucet, or going off to work on Monday morning. If everything we did was done to the Lord's glory in Jesus' name then even the most disliked chores would become more than bearable and we would not end up taking God's name in vain when things go wrong or worry and grumble when plans go awry. The fundamental principle that ought to govern every Christian's life is: **WHATEVER YOU DO OR SAY, DO IT ALL IN THE NAME OF JESUS, GIVING THANKS TO GOD THE FATHER THROUGH HIM**.

To do something in the name of Jesus means to do it in relationship to Him, in harmony with His will, in dependence upon His power and to His glory. We as Christians do everything in the name of Jesus when our relationship to Christ controls our relationship with everyone else and everything else. This is something for us who carry Christ's name as Christians to remember and strive to do more often in the coming New Year. Not only to begin our worship services in the name of our Triune God and our Savior, but to do everything in His name with thanksgiving to God the Father.

Our second text from Daniel tells us **WHY?**

II: BECAUSE IT IS HIS STORY!

Our Lord Jesus rules everything, He controls time, the world, the universe. Why does everything continue on as it has in the past? Because God's Word commands it. Why do seasons come and go? Because God has set His world to run that way according to His Word. Daniel says, **HE CHANGES THE TIMES AND THE SEASONS, HE REMOVES KINGS AND RAISES UP KINGS...**

No one person on this earth, in fact not even all the people on this earth can do anything that our God does not allow. Because of sin, man does act contrary to God's will. It never is God's will that evil be spread on this earth, that wicked people do cruel and harmful things to people, but the Lord in

His all knowing wisdom allows and permits these things to take place. Why? One reason is for the strengthening of the believer's faith and another reason is for the punishment of the unbelievers. At all times the Lord is calling His faithful to repentance and to a stronger love, faith, trust and reliance upon Him and His Word. At all times the Lord God wills that mankind turn from his evil way and follow Him, believe in His forgiveness, in His redemption, in His Son's suffering, death and resurrection.

The Lord continues to write history; **HIS STORY!** For the history of this world unfolds and can only unfold as the Lord allows it to. He writes the script. He directs the script. What a blessed comfort that is, knowing that there is someone in control, that it is not just chaos out there, that all things do have a purpose and reason, God's purpose and His reason. The year 2011 will unfold as God has declared it and purposed it and for the believer we can be assured in 2011 as we were in 2010 that **ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD TO THEM THAT LOVE GOD, TO THEM THAT ARE CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE.**

Yes, the Lord has written **HIS STORY**, some 6,000 years of it so far. He has raised up some famous and powerful people upon thrones and He has caused many to also fall. He has allowed nations to prosper and grow and some to be captured and destroyed. He has showered His people with riches and blessings beyond compare spiritually and physically. God has directed the events of this world in the Old Testament leading up to the central events of all human history---the birth of His Son, Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection as well as other events in the New Testament with the spreading of the Gospel. In the fullness of time His Son came in humility born of the woman to save us from our sins and in the fullness of time His Son will again come in glory to deliver us from this sinful world to be with Him forever in heaven. It has all been **HIS STORY** of creation, of deliverance, of protection, of love, of preservation, of forgiveness, of redemption, of resurrection to everlasting life.

Yes, history is **HIS STORY!** Therefore, as we close another chapter in our lives, as another year seeps into the dark recesses of our memories we too should do as Paul declares **GIVE THANKS TO GOD IN THE NAME OF OUR SAVIOR JESUS, CELEBRATE THE END OF THE PAST AND LOOK FORWARD WITH CONFIDENT TRUST TO THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW.**

Looking back on 2010 we will pick out some moments of time, which will remain in our minds and memories for many years. Moments which the Lord used to teach us patience, hope, forgiveness, love, trust, obedience and most of all moments which led us into His Word. So with thanksgiving to our God, in the name of the Ruler of all history we look back upon the events of 2010.

We began the New Year with our continued sermon series in the Old Testament with lessons on King David's life. On Wednesday evenings we studied the Formula of Concord. Our new Church officers were installed. Our school put on a Heritage Festival.

In February/March we met on Wednesday evenings to study our Savior's Passion by asking **Where in the World is God? in our Lenten devotions.** Pastors Mike Eichstadt and David Baker took part in our Lenten exchange.

In April we celebrated the events that changed the world---our Savior's suffering, death and resurrection with our children again telling us the Good News of our Savior's Resurrection in our Sunrise Easter Service.

In May we celebrated our Savior's Ascension and congregations throughout our synod celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the Church of the Lutheran Confession. Pictures of congregation members and groups were taken that were then displayed on a poster at the June 2010 CLC Convention. A Mystery Dinner was held as part of the End of the Year Fun Night activities for our school. Joseph

McDonald and Rachel Schaser were examined and confessed their faith in their Savior and the Triune God and were confirmed.

In June Pastor and Delegate Matt Schaser attended the Great Lake's Pastoral-Delegate Conference in Coloma, MI. Ms. Ohlmann's parent's Building Center was destroyed by fire in Valentine, NE. The CLC held its Convention and celebrated with pastors, professors, teachers, delegates and members from around the CLC a special 50th anniversary service. A wedding shower for Becky Gerbitz was held.

In July VBS flyers were distributed throughout the Middleton area. Edward Horejsh was reborn into the kingdom of God through Baptism. We received Nate Ude as communicant member through transfer from Messiah, Eau Claire.

August was a busy month of activities. Our annual VBS was held with the theme: "Children of the Heavenly Father." Vicar Mark Tiefel arrived for his first few weeks of working with Pastor Bernthal. A personal evangelism workshop entitled Salt and Light was held. Becky Gerbitz and Yusef Haddad were united in Holy Matrimony in Christ. I received and subsequently returned the call from Prince of Peace, Loveland, CO. The Evangelism Committee built a religious float for the Good Neighbor Day's Parade in Middleton. Four of our young members----Sarah Gerbitz, Tim & Rachel Schaser and Joseph McDonald left to attend ILHS.

In September Peace Thru Christ Lutheran School opened its doors for its 10th year with new students Isabel, Mathilda and Omar Bertrang and Caleb Arndt. Our Sunday School/Rally Day & Church Picnic were held. We began a Wednesday night Power Point summary of each of the chapters of Pastor David Lau's book: "Out of Necessity—A History of the Church of the Lutheran Confession." I attended the Great Lakes' Pastoral Conference in Batavia, IL. Vicar Mark Tiefel conducted our Mission Festival speaking on Matthew 9: Looking Back for the Future of our Mission. A farewell meal was held as Vicar Tiefel returned to the Seminary in Eau Claire.

In October we held our annual bike outing. School was recessed for a few days while Ms. Ohlmann attended the CLC Teacher's Conference at Immanuel Lutheran, Mankato, MN. We received Anne Dumke as communicant member through transfer from Faith, Markesan. A joint Reformation service was held in Messiah Lutheran, Hales Corners.

In November our new Web Site with updates was discussed at our Evangelism meeting. Our Thanksgiving Worship centered on **Things I Need to Remember About Me on this Thanksgiving Day---I need the Lord physically and spiritually and I need to remember to give thanks.** Several members attended a joint fellowship workshop on the topic of personal evangelism outreach held at Messiah, Eau Claire.

In December our Advent devotions centered around the **Reactions to Jesus' Birth.** Sunday morning service was cancelled for the first time in years due to heavy snow. Prayers of the congregation ascended to the Lord for our brother in Christ Steve Schmidt who was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. We went caroling to Oak Park Place, Walnut Grove and the Riggerts. Our children told us the Good News of Jesus' birth: **OUT OF DARKNESS/LIGHT!** I accepted the call to be the vacancy pastor for Ascension Lutheran, Batavia, IL. Last Sunday several men of the congregation read Old Testament prophecies and New Testament fulfillments of Jesus' birth.

This was just a brief summary of **HIS STORY 2010 among us, His congregation of believers here at Peace Thru Christ, Middleton WI.** Much more could have been added for the Lord's mercies are immeasurable and new every morning. But this brief summary shows to us that the Lord is indeed with us, in our midst, ruling, guiding, loving, protecting, preserving us as His own. As Daniel wrote in our text: **HE GIVES WISDOM TO THE WISE AND KNOWLEDGE TO THOSE WHO HAVE UNDERSTANDING. HE REVEALS DEEP AND SECRET THINGS, HE KNOWS WHAT IS IN**

THE DARKNESS, AND LIGHT DWELLS WITH HIM.

Every week we heard the Word of God proclaimed to us that revealed the wisdom of our God and the deep, secrets of our redemption. Every day in school our children learned about the **LIGHT of the world**, our Savior and all that He has done for us. Let us give thanks to our God and let us this evening take some time, as we celebrate the passing of the old and the entering in of the new to reflect back upon our own individual, personal lives and that of our families. When we think of these things we can only be led to thank the One who stands out in all of our memories; our Lord and our Savior God who has lived and died for us and daily keeps us in His loving care. **O GIVE THANKS UNTO THE LORD, FOR HIS STORY 2010.**

Amen.