

Jesus Gives Us A New Year

- ✦ sorrow mixed with fear
- ✦ joy mixed with hope

In the Name of Jesus, the Lord who does not change, but changes everything, dear loved ones of God:

One thing I love about my Lord Jesus is how realistic He is. He does not try to sugar coat life like a few sprinkles on a Christmas cookie. Jesus tells it like it is. In fact, Jesus entered our world to suffer life with us. He came to carry our infirmities and sorrows, all caused because of sin in God’s perfect creation. Jesus carried them to the cross. And when He rose victorious from the grave, Jesus proved His power to keep this awesome promise: **“I am making everything new.”** (Revelation 21:5) He shows how well He understands our needs tonight in Luke 13. In each section we will see how life goes on in **sorrow mixed with fear** and **joy mixed with hope**. It’s a gift from God as **Jesus Gives Us A New Year**.

Jesus was not happy with His fellow Jews. Were they much like our society today: too many weathermen and not enough wise men? They could look at the sky and give you the forecast, but they could not see current events in the light of eternity. Tragedies like missing airplanes and terrorist bombings happened long before airplanes and bombs were invented. And like so many people today, they wanted to believe they were safe because they were better. But Jesus said, **“No, I tell you, but unless you repent, you too will all perish.”**¹ Events all around us are bright yellow warning signs from God. At all times this coming year we need to be living in repentance: **sorrow mixed with fear** because of God’s wrath at sin, **joy mixed with hope** because we are firmly trusting Jesus as our Savior.

True repentance shows in good works. **Jesus Gives Us A New Year** because He wants to see us doing good works that flow from faith-born love. Remember Jesus’ classic parable for New Year’s?

“A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard. He came looking for fruit on it, but he did not find any. ⁷So he said to the gardener, ‘Listen, for three years now I’ve come looking for fruit on this fig tree and haven’t found any. Cut it down. Why even let it use up the soil?’ ⁸ But he replied to him, ‘Sir, leave it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. ⁹ Then if it produces fruit next year, fine. But if not, you can cut it down.’”

God gives us so many blessings, both spiritual and material. He no more wants fruitless Christians than you want a car with flat tires. You don’t work for a down payment and then send in your monthly checks to put a new car up on blocks to rust away in your yard. Why would we expect God to want nothing in return from us? **Sorrow mixed with fear** will always confess how far short we fall. **Joy mixed with hope** will keep looking to Christ for forgiveness and strength to prove our repentance by our deeds. If you go on trial this year as a Christian, let there be enough evidence to convict you.

What kind of heartless people are we that our traditions can get in the way of God’s kindness? We would like to think we’d never be hypocrites like the synagogue ruler who **“was indignant that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath. He said to the crowd, ‘There are six days when work should be done. So come to be healed on those days, and not on the Sabbath day!’”** They finally felt their shame when Jesus pointed out their care of animals on the Sabbath. So why not a **“daughter of Abraham”**? **Sorrow mixed with fear** will keep us asking if anything in our culture or traditions gets in the way of God’s love. Do we somehow hinder God’s Word and sacrament? There we find **joy mixed with hope** for wisdom and love.

¹ W.P. ~ Wartburg Project – Luke popular review (w/o footnotes) – unless otherwise stated the Bible text. [M.C. 12/31/2014]

Through the coming year we'll keep praying, ***"Thy kingdom come."*** And it will all by itself, but we're asking God to make His kingdom come to us and through us to others. It may look as small and insignificant as a mustard seed, but what great good God can do even for the little birds who sing in its branches! You won't hear it spreading any more than you'd hear yeast in bread. But God's kingdom grows through everything – silent and steady. Keep **sorrow mixed with fear** lest we miss out on God's kingdom. Add plenty of **joy mixed with hope** because God wants His kingdom to come to us with all its great blessings for body and soul. After all, Jesus taught us to pray, ***"Thy kingdom come."***

The same crowd today that thinks there are many ways to heaven and many names for God, expects God to keep the light on for them whenever they decide they're good and ready to demand entrance into heaven. You could not do that at your neighbor's house. Why are we so short on **sorrow mixed with fear** that we think we can demand God open His door? People still want to vacation on the *Titanic*. "Ignore the icebergs! Dead ahead full! No stops! Keep the music playing! When we think it's time, we'll come up on deck. Then you have a lifeboat ready for us." But their panic won't help any better than the poor folks on that sinking ferry boat in the Adriatic Sea. Why not hear God calling now? His Holy Spirit keeps crying out in this New Year for everyone to have **sorrow mixed with fear**: "Come and take my free salvation! Receive **joy mixed with hope** in my Word and sacrament."

Otherwise, it's not a pretty picture Jesus paints. ***"There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown outside. ²⁹People will come from east and west, from north and south, and will recline at the table in the kingdom of God. ³⁰And note this: some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."*** God put His chosen nation of Israel first by sending His Son first to them. By rejecting Jesus they were putting themselves last in line where they could wander off into that outer darkness of perdition. God won't discriminate between races and nations. He has a place at His banquet table for everyone who repents in **sorrow mixed with fear** and trusts God's Word for **joy mixed with hope**. Keep hoping in God, my friends. He will not disappoint you.

Even when they tried to knock Jesus off course with warnings about bloodthirsty Herod trying to kill Him, Jesus kept pressing on. He came the first time as the world's Savior and the Suffering Servant of the Lord. He would keep going day by day until He could give His life in Jerusalem like all the faithful prophets before Him. But as the Prophet, God's ultimate Word in human flesh and blood, Jesus would finally triumph over sin, death and hell on the third day when He rose again from the dead.

As you hear His call tonight, keep **sorrow mixed with fear** and **joy mixed with hope** like little chicks running under their mother's wings for shelter. Jesus will stand fast in the firestorms of life and protect us, just as He let God's wrath come down on Him in our place. Because He lives, we too shall live. And when He makes everything new, we will put **sorrow** and **fear** behind us as **joy mixed with hope** blossoms and blooms for eternity in heaven's bliss. Like the rejoicing crowds of heaven in Isaiah, we too will shout:

"Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation." (Isaiah 25:9 NIV84)

Enjoy God's gift of a New Year! Amen.