

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Quincy, IL
Rev. Martin Eden

New Year's Eve Service
Saturday, December 31, 2022, at 5:00 p.m.

“How Soon Is Now?”

Luke 12:35-40

Changing over to a new year is a strange, yet familiar event. Each year, we struggle the first few times we sign our name and write out the date. Changing over to a new year immediately declares the past year to be “old”. In a few hours, the year of our Lord 2022 will seem “old”. What happens? How does the movement of a clock or the soon to be dropping of a ball in Times Square change our view of something as significant as a year?

Time is such an interesting part of our existence. It is something intangible. You have a past. You live in something called the present. And you look forward into an unknowable future.

Our past is unchangeable. Whatever has happened, has happened. Yet, the past does change. For everyone, our memories do change. As we put more

and more time between the past and the present, our opinion of the past tends to wax nostalgic. We remember “the good ole days.”

I believe this phenomenon is partly due to the reality of forgiveness. We tend to look back at people we have known, especially our loved ones, and we “forget” about the faults and failures. This doesn’t mean we have a loss of memory, but we tend to look past the failures and remember the good. Quite often difficult and challenging times become humorous stories later in life. And then there are some events which will never be thought of in this way.

But with forgiveness, the reality of the past (all of the past) does change. The past is washed clean. This happens not merely through the passing of time. Forgiveness is not developing nostalgic thoughts about “the good ole days.” Forgiveness is real, complete, and immediate. Forgiveness makes all things new.

I believe that our human fascination with the new year is man’s yearning to start over. Just as we look with increasing fondness upon the past, we tend to look with hope for the future. This is why we welcome and celebrate the coming of the New Year. Everyone looks to the New Year as a chance to start over.

Perhaps it is because we recognize that the present won't be thought of as the "good ole days" for quite some time.

The hardest part of time is the present. First of all, it is impossible to grasp. If I ask you, "What time is it?" You could reply, "Do you mean the time right now, or the time it was when you asked me?" Think about it. The present in which you live immediately becomes the past. We gather in God's House this evening and our gathering is not the present. The hymns we have sung and the Word of God that has been read are the recent past. Every word I will say is in the near future of right now. And "right now" just became the recent past.

We don't live in the present. That is a lie that the world has tricked you into believing. The world tells you to live for now. We cannot "live for now." "Now" does not exist in any meaningful way. Our lives consist of the recent past and the near future. Therefore, our lives consist of two parts: past and future. This means our lives consist of the need for forgiveness for our past – forgiveness which is real, complete, and immediate (something only found in Christ).

And the other side of our existence is hope: Faith in a future. Stay dressed and ready for action. Keep your lamps burning. Be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast. We are but humble servants watching and waiting.

Changing over to a New Year is a strange, yet familiar event because it is a microcosm of our entire life – especially for those of us who are in Christ. Those who are outside of Christ and His Church will speak of hope, and will speak of time healing the wounds of the past, but it is not the same.

The forgiveness which Christ brings is real, complete, and immediate. The hope we share is real, and full, and certain. Being a baptized Christian is like having New Year's every day. Every day we emerge and arise reborn, renewed, forgiven, and washed clean in the blood of the Lamb.

Every day we stand dressed and ready for action. Watching; waiting; the Master is coming. Amen.