**“Remember”**

#

Psalm 130

 New Years’ Eve

From Psalm 103, verse 17: “the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children’s children”.

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We’re at the time when news medias come out with their “**2020 Year in Review**”, and this years’ may be **more joke than serious**. I heard someone talking about how their mom use to always say to them (when growing up and in trouble) that she’d knock them clear into “next year” … **longing for her to do that** during this past one.

In a “2020 Year in Review”, what would be touted? A pandemic? Violent unrest? An uncivil and weird election? How about the deaths of friends? Or not getting together with extended family members, no hugs, limited travel, lots of masks, cleaning things and incessantly washing our hands, and schools and learning fractured, and empty stadiums for sports with cardboard people and recorded but limited crowd noise. And church services at home in front of a TV … and Skype and Zoom and isolation and, again, the unimaginable work of nurses and doctors in hospital COVID wards. And what we only know (first hand) is those situations **in America**. **Every** country on this earth has its own version of the “unpleasantries” of 2020. Nightmare for some. Depressing for all. Does **regret** also have a place in your year?

3

Tonight, people will **try to put on festive faces**. Noisemakers and music, late nights to see midnight’s turn and, maybe, a few adult-beverages will help us, **more**, hope for a better 2021 than toast the year past. It will be a time of (in one way or another) **absolving ourselves of the past** in even secular ways (if that’s possible), but (for God’s children) **being absolved in a real way** **/ cleansing of forgiveness that God promises upon a confession** … what **He commits to**.

Maybe 2020 found you drifting **from God** because of circumstances or laziness. Maybe you **let** that drift occur because of anger or, at least, a pre-occupation with other things you thought was more pressing than Him this year. Maybe your regret is not **your regret**, but a blaming, instead, of God and hoping He “gets His act together” pretty soon, since (you think) “**He**” (not you or your part in a fallen society) is the “problem”. Maybe confession isn’t on your lips and in your heart so as to, actually, **get to the absolution and being made anew**. Maybe “blame for sufferings and inconvenience” you away from yourself (on God) because if it was “on you” this year would be overwhelming in regret.

But “the wages of sin **is** death and corruption from, even, selfish ambition or quests apart from God, and confession means “taking ownership” for our own situations, too big to do. **Receive** **cleansing and newness of life from the absolution of forgiveness**!

2

When the thought of confessing (or taking ownership of your shortcomings) sounds bothersome, remember the **reminders of** **blessedness under the Lord** in Psalm 103:

“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless **His holy name**? Bless the Lord, O my soul, and **forget not all His benefits**, who **forgives all your iniquity**, who **heals all your diseases**, who **redeems your life from the pit**, who **crowns you with steadfast love and mercy**, who **satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s**. The Lord **is** merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He **will not always** chide, nor **will He** keep His anger forever. He **does not** deal with us according to our sins, **nor** repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, **so great is His steadfast love toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does He remove our transgressions from us**.”

From a hymn:

“Bold **shall** I stand in that great day, **cleansed** and **redeemed**, **no debt to pay**; **fully absolved through these I am from sin and fear, from guilt and shame**” (*LSB* 563:2).

1

It is the **Baby Christmas brought us** who absolves us. As one baptized into Christ, you’ve been **baptized into His purpose for being born (so Christmas)**: His atoning work for your sin and through His bloodshed and death. In **Jesus**, God remembers your sin no more … that’s His promise because of His Son’s blood. **Absolution, then** (upon a heart of confession and honesty after Jesus’ successful sacrifice) is then **assured** and **complete**. ….

It’s **Satan** who wants you to forget that: bringing up your inadequacy and making the situations like what happened all through 2020, disgust us and encourage anger from us. He enjoys it when you and I **remember those things** and **not God’s extensive and constant mercy and grace**. It’s He (for instance) who **preserved you through 2020**. His mercies **were** “new every morning”. He’s given you a body and soul, eyes, ears, and all your members, your reason and all your senses, and still cares for them. Every Good (and there was much Good in He sustained us through every 2020 challenge) was **His creative gift**. He **works justice (in His own time and way)** and **cares for the oppressed and governs (overall and in an eternal way) in righteousness**. Everything we’ve **needed** (with the caveat of some things we may have wanted but shouldn’t have had from need), **He’s provided, giving and delivering to us more (far more) than we’d ever deserved**.

Tonight, we will turn the calendar page from 2020 to 2021, and the same flawed person (in each of us) will venture into the new year just like we left the past one: “as poor, miserable, sinners” needing God’s grace and salvation … His gifts. We ought not forget our fallen existence without Him. We ought not to forget His forgiveness and absolution.

Because God promises to not deal with us by our own unworthiness … or societies … but by grace and mercy. **YOU (IN THIS COMING YEAR) WILL CONTINUE TO BE (BY BAPTISM AND THE SAVIOR’S REDEMPTION) GOD’S BELOVED CHILD AND A BROTHER OR SISTER CONNECTED TO CHRIST JESUS … ABSOLVED AND KNOWING IT UPON CONFESSION.**

If you will choose to resolve to live better, it’s a noble idea and quest, and may God grant you success in that. But as you make resolutions, don’t make them to **justify yourselves**, because that’s taken care of, and Satan will love to remind you that you can’t make up for your shortcomings yourself. Make your resolutions in light of Jesus and His sacrifice for you on a cross … He (literally) loved you to death. **He’s dealt, already, with your sins, shedding His blood to pay for them all**. Your baptism into that **covers you**. You’re ready to receive absolution.

As you pass from 2020 to 2021, **remember not** past sins confessed and dealt with on the cross of Jesus. **Remember, instead, (as He does)** the absolution “steadfast love of the Lord” promises you: “from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, righteousness to children’s children”.

You were sustained through this past year by God’s grace. God’s grace **will** sustain you in the next. So, “**Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within US bless His holy name!**”

In Jesus’ name. Amen.