



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

December 31, 2023

Pastor James Enderle

1st Sunday after Christmas; New Year's Eve

First Lesson: [1 Kings 8:6-13](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 111

Second Lesson/ Sermon Text: [Colossians 3:12-17](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Luke 2:25-40](#)

A Christmas New Year's Resolution

1. Let the ____ of Christ ____
2. ____ about the ____
3. ____ the ____ with one another
4. ____ the ____ to one another

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

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

Today, New Year's Eve, we are on the verge of another new year. It feels like it came pretty fast. It's hard to believe it's almost 2024. Did you see that today is 123123 (12/31/23)? I saw the little meme of the Count (from Sesame Street) saying "123123." It's a fun and very unique thing for the last day of the year.

As we look forward to the New Year though, have you started putting out your New Year's resolutions? Do you still do that? Do you still set different goals, wipe the slate clean and say "I really wanted to do this. I had that idea and I just didn't get that done." I have a friend who wanted to read 60 books, and she met that one. I think she read more than 100 books this year. It's always fun to set some goals and some resolutions. Often those resolutions are directed at improving yourself, maybe something physically, something with work, financially for yourself, but usually it's really about improvement and focusing on yourself and what YOU can do better.

Resolutions are good. They aren't a bad thing. But we know statistics of how many people keep their resolutions. It's not very high. We like to set those goals, but it's hard to keep them.

I'd like to put forward today a **Christmas New Year's Resolution**, something that for us will be a little easier to keep. It's something that we know from Christmas is true and it's

focused not so much on yourself and self-improvement but focuses more on God and what He has done and what He is doing in you and for you.

If you are focusing on Christmas, what we really hear about in the theme we talked about in that video, the good news, that is being shared, the news of great joy and that good news that was preached. The good news that was shared was peace. The angels spoke about that peace. Simeon spoke about that peace that Jesus would bring. And today we hear in Paul's words similar encouragements or similar understanding of what Christ brings. Christ and Christmas brings peace.

In Verse 15 of our text, he says, ***"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace."*** What is Paul encouraging the people in Colossi and us to do? He is encouraging us to *let the peace of Christ reign*. In our lives, that big New Year's resolution, the Christmas New Year's resolution I'd like you to think about, is to let that peace rule in your life. Why is that hard to do? If you look in the earlier section right before our text in Colossians, he talks about all the difficult things that we struggle with. ***"Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry."*** [\(Colossians 3:5\)](#) We know that we have that sinful nature and we live in this sinful world, so it's difficult.

It's difficult to have peace in this world. It's difficult to have peace in our hearts because there is a true struggle. There are wars out in the world, but there is a war going on inside. When you look to the New Year, is it easy to be uneasy and not have peace? What is one of the things that I struggle with and maybe you struggle with? Uncertainty when you don't know what the future is going to be like. That's often what happens in a New Year, too. We don't know what is ahead. But Paul is telling us, through Christ, that we can let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts, to reign, to know that He is in control, to know that He is over all things, and that will give us a true peace.

How do we know that, or how do we really let that peace reign? We have to hear about it. Isn't that what he says? He says that we need to hear about the peace. He says this: ***"Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts."*** We need to hear what is done for us. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly. What is that message? Earlier it says that we should forgive others as ***the Lord forgave you***. We need to dwell in that, to let Christ dwell in us.

Often when people are struggling and feeling at odds and don't have peace in their hearts, there could be lots of things that cause it, but you can say "How is your devotion life? Have you been going to church? Have you been hearing about God's love for you?" The truth is there are different things you are going to listen to. What is the

number one thing you listen to? It's you! Do you always tell yourself the truth? Is your view on things always very accurate? I think the truth is that we are so hard on ourselves. We tear ourselves down. We speak horrible things about ourselves. We are not at peace because of who we are and what we have done. We will tell ourselves, "You don't deserve anything. You're a failure! You have failed over and over again. People have done this to you because you deserve it. You've done that and you deserve nothing good." So we lie to ourselves. We are some of the worst things to hear from.

Along with that, we have the rest of the world and the culture who is telling us, "Listen to your hearts and pick yourself up. Try harder. Just believe in yourself." So either we are struggling because we are lying to ourselves and we are tearing ourselves down, or maybe the world is telling you "Pick yourself up. You can do it!" Then maybe you get puffed up more than you feel you should.

If you rely on yourself too much, what could happen? We see that you again, those expectations you will never meet, or they're not very high expectations if you are reaching them. It's hard when all we listen to is ourselves and the world, so we need to *hear about the peace*.

Someone recently asked, "Why is it important to go to church?" We can read the Bible, but when we are on our own, sometimes we are going to focus on the wrong things. Maybe we focus on the Law and we need to be encouraged. We need to hear God's Word, not only from a preacher but also, notice what it says: to ***teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.*** When we sing these psalms, we sing these words that have been spoken by the church for years and years and years, we know that these are good things for us to hear. And hopefully you are hearing the good message from me.

But the other thing, notice it says to ***teach and admonish one another.*** What is the encouragement? We are to *share the peace with one another*. When you gather here together at church, we are singing those hymns. We are singing His praises and sharing God's Word. You're hearing a message from me. But the encouragement is also that you are growing together with Christian brothers and sisters who will give you God's Word. They will give you that peace. Sometimes before they can give you the peace, maybe they need to call you out and give you Law and share "That's dangerous for you. That's hurting you in this way." But then you need to hear that forgiveness from them—to forgive others as God has forgiven you. Maybe you need to hear that as you are struggling and thinking "God can't forgive me!" You can hear it from me, but to hear it from someone else, to hear "You are forgiven. You are loved." That's why we gather, to sing together, to praise, and to hear what God has done for us. That Christ has come. He was born to bring you peace, today and forever.

As you grow, it's not just for here on Sundays but to grow those relationships and to encourage each other through the week. One way that we would like to encourage you to do that as well; there are those sheets in the back of church. Tomorrow we are starting a two-year Bible reading plan. You maybe have seen some information on that. I think this is on the back of the Service Folder as well. There are different ways to sign up. We will have the Bible readings each week in the Announcements as well. Think about all these things—how do we get that peace, to be in the Word and to hear about it?

If we are reading God's Word, then I'm going to hear that. I can be encouraged by that. Then if I'm doing that with my brothers and sisters, I can ask questions and we can encourage each other. What better way to be in that peace and to encourage one another? There are all sorts of ways you can do that. If you're reading, you can talk to your friends that are reading it. There are some online ways to do that as well. There is Facebook group and YouVersion group, but there is encouragement to share and to grow and to know of that peace that God gives us.

As we grow in that, what happens? When I'm living in that peace, when I have this Christmas New Year's Resolution to grow in that peace and His Word and encourage one another, there is something more that happens as well. In Verse 17 he says, ***"And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."*** I think he kind of explains what he is talking about in the verses before this. He says, ***"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."***

What if you had those first words of Verse 12 as your New Year's resolution, to be clothed in compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience? What I would say is that it's a way to give the peace to one another. Give that peace, that God has given us, to one another; to give compassion, gentleness, patience, kindness, and to forgive as the Lord has forgiven us. It's not so much about how I can improve. It's not all about me. It's about giving a peace that I have been given through God, knowing that God sent His Son, Jesus, to come and live for me, to die for me, to forgive me. He gives me a peace to know that He is with me in every circumstance. Therefore, I can give that peace to others.

It's not saying that I am going to do those things perfectly. Not at all! We aren't going to be perfect in our compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience. That's not what this means. The encouragement, he says is ***"whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus,"*** that as we are filled up with the peace that He gives us in His Word, as we encourage each other with that Word, I do

believe that flows out then in actions, in a way that we can show that patience, humility and love with others. And that big one that he talks about—to forgive. Man, we struggle with that one. We know that we have been forgiven. If God could forgive me, how could I withhold forgiveness from another? And to know what peace it is that I have been forgiven, and really then to forgive others and what peace that can give me as well. It's not to say that this is earning me anything, and I know I will fall short, but God, through Christ (Christ did those things perfectly for us), and through the Holy Spirit and through His Word, He will enable us to love, to grow and to share that kindness with others.

Why do we want to be gentle? Why do we want to be patient? So that we can share that peace we have. So that others may come to know that peace, not just for a few days but for eternity.

In this New Year, 2024, who knows what is going to come? Another election year—ugh, we don't talk about that, right? It's the worst thing we could talk about, right? There are so many unknowns. But what we have can't be taken away—the peace that God gives us through Christ and that we can dwell in every day and then not stress about the big things. Don't worry about the unknown. God has it in control. Love your neighbor. Give them that peace daily and encouragement so that they can grow closer to their Savior as well. In this Christmas New Year's Resolution, know that peace that is in your life. Let that peace of Christ reign in your hearts. Amen.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [\(Philippians 4:7\)](#) Amen.