

Teaching for 1-2-08

A New Year: Jesus As the Head

Here we are at the beginning of a brand new year! Most of us are still trying to deal with the reality that another year has come and gone. But we are now launched into 2008, and many are approaching it with a keen sense of anticipation.

The close of 2007 brought events that are just a hint of the convergence of world events coming in 2008. Many analysts in government and business sectors, as well as leaders in the Church, are warning that 2008 is a year to watch and be ready. Although these things are spoken with a degree of uncertainty, there is one thing that must be certain in 2008—that Jesus Christ is truly the Head of the Church!

We as the Western Church have a keen ability to immerse ourselves in the activities and busyness of our lives. We have our plans and goals for 2008, including those things that we will be promoting for the New Year with great enthusiasm. But we also have a knack for losing sight of Jesus as the Head of the Church. Let this be a gentle reminder to keep our eyes on Jesus as we enter into this New Year. He may have plans that are different from ours—and if we are not looking to Him, we may miss them.

Here are some reminders of why our focus in this New Year should be on Jesus:

Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before God made anything at all and is supreme over all creation. Christ is the one through whom God created everything in heaven and earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see—kings, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities. Everything has been created through him and for him. He existed before everything else began, and he holds all creation together.

Christ is the head of the church, which is his body. He is the first of all who will rise from the dead, and so he is first in everything.

Colossians 1:15-

18 (NLT)

Let us remember as we get wrapped up in our various activities in this New Year that ***He is first in everything.***

You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ. He forgave all our sins. He canceled the record that contained the charges against us. He took it and destroyed it by nailing it to Christ's cross. In this way, God disarmed the evil rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross of Christ.

Colossians

2:13-15 (NLT)

Never lose sight of the fact that it is Jesus who canceled the record of your sins, and it is Jesus

who disarmed the evil forces of our enemy. The Lord has given us authority, but it is not our own work that makes that victory possible. ***It is all about Him!***

God saved you by his special favor when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

Ephesians

2:8-10 (NLT)

Whatever the Lord may allow us to accomplish in this New Year—whatever may happen in our lives or in our communities—**it is not about us!** It is all about Him. God has saved us and created us in Christ with plans for our future. In this New Year, our goal should be to walk so close to the Lord that we accomplish all that He planned for us long ago. Then we will remember ***it is all about Him.***

So don't get tired of doing what is good. Don't get discouraged and give up, for we will reap a harvest of blessing at the appropriate time. Whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone, especially to our Christian brothers and sisters.

Galatians

6:9-10 (NLT)

Sometime during this year, there is a good possibility you may grow weary in your labors for the Lord. Even in that, He is the rewarder of our faith. Take this exhortation to heart. Don't give up when discouragement comes because even then we are called to serve others. Remember the words of Hebrews 12:1-4:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily hinders our progress. And let us run with endurance the race that God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from start to finish. He was willing to die a shameful death on the cross because of the joy he knew would be his afterward. Now he is seated in the place of highest honor beside God's throne in heaven. Think about all he endured when sinful people did such terrible things to him, so that you don't become weary and give up. After all, you have not yet given your lives in your struggle against sin.

So as we enter this New Year—full of potential, promise, and the unknown—let us take to heart the Word of God for our lives, families, churches, ministries, and communities. Let us look to Jesus and serve one another. Consider what might happen in 2008 if we were to live out God's Word in all its fullness!

Perhaps it would look something like this:

A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. And all the believers met together constantly and shared everything they had. They sold their possessions and shared the proceeds with those in need. They worshiped together at the

Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity—all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved.

Acts

2:43-47 (NLT)

May it be so, Lord!