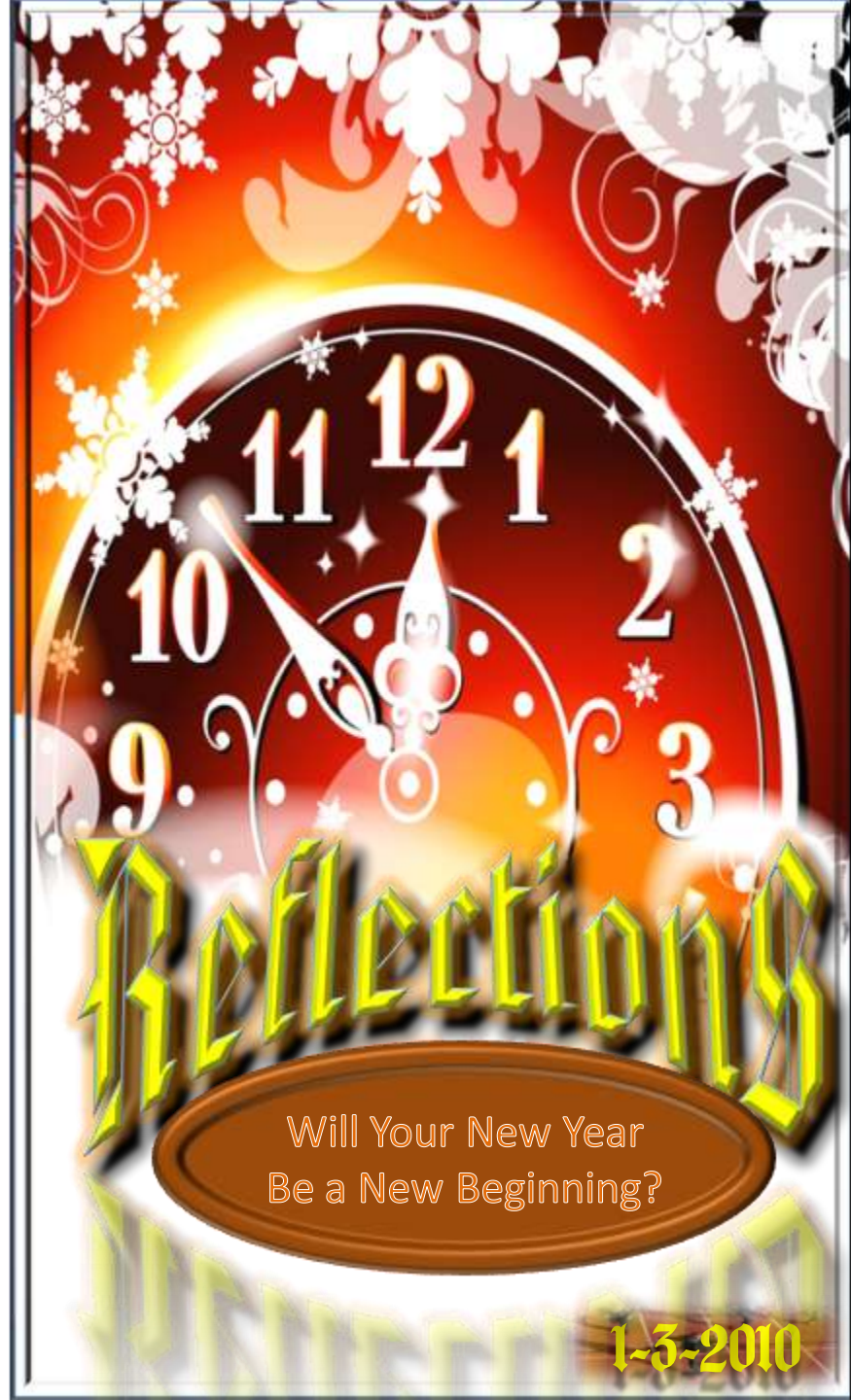


Sermon Notes





Reflections

Everybody loves a New Year's celebration, right? All the parties, the hoopla, and the grand promise of a brand new year. Many begin the year with resolutions of meaningful changes in their lives and lifestyles. Half the population goes on a diet for a couple of days, the other half resolves to do so but can't quite make it happen. It seems that most folks expect the new year to be better than the one that was just completed. However, when we start the new year with the same unresolved issues, habits, and behaviors, that were a plague to us during the last year, how can we expect to see a different, or new and better, result when we engage life in the same old ways?

Would you really like the new year to turn out better than last? If so, then do I have good news for you! Jesus has promised a new and transformed life available in Him! The Scripture gives a variety of promises related to a new life in Christ. He has given us the blessing of renewal. *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17 NKJ)* and *But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. (Ephesians 4:20-24 NKJ)* There are, of course, many others but the idea is clear from these that He doesn't want us to continue in our old ways of thinking and behaving.

He has provided us, with the gift of the Holy Spirit, the authority to see things differently and His daily presence which allows us to respond quite differently to the many circumstances that we all must face. It is His expectation that we will appropriate for our lives the gifts He has given in order to serve Him with an outlook on life that reminds us every day that we belong to Him and that He will never leave us nor forsake us. He has also provided us with the

disciplines that will strengthen us daily as we rely on His Word for our personal walk through life. He says through the Apostle Paul,, *Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!* *Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things. (Philippians 4:4-8 NKJ)*

Jesus challenges us to practice, in our daily walk, these things. First of all, putting Him first in our lives... *But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. (Matthew 6:33 NKJ)* Secondly, we are called to be His living sacrifices, transformed in Him. *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (Romans 12:1-2 NKJ)* Finally we are directed to be obedient to His Word. *But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say? Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. (Luke 6:46-48 NKJ)*

Now we can look forward to a truly new year with new beginnings in our lives, in our daily practices, and in our spiritual disciplines. We can read and memorize His Word. We can share the gospel with others, we can also be obedient to His Word. We can each choose to pray daily with thanksgiving and praise for His excellent greatness. We can allow His Spirit to permeate all that we are and all that we choose to do in order to lift up His name through our lives and witness. So, I wish for you a truly Happy New Year! A year that will see a transformation in our lives and in our daily walk, and a year that sees our lives count for our Savior and Lord. *Happy New Year! Let's serve Him faithfully together in 2010! Pastor Doug*