

New Years Day Service

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Let's pray together.

Heavenly Father, today, Lord, as we approach your word, Lord, we recognize that as your eyes are upon us it is your grace and your grace alone that sustains us. Lord, we confess this very hour, this very day, that your favor, your blessing, even the very life that we possess within our lungs is simply because of your instrument in the hand of grace in our lives. Lord, the eternity that, Lord, your word teaches us that we possess in Christ Jesus with you is simply because of your grace. So Lord, may you shower not only our lives but the reading and the preaching of this text with your grace today. May we see your face upon us through your word. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

This morning, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to the book of James in the New Testament. The book of James 3, and today as we're turning to James 3, we would have to admit this is a special day. It's always a special day when we gather as a family of faith but this is the day that, at least on the calendar, represents a new beginning. This is a day where we look to days of past and then to days of the future. There is something about this day that somehow, someway, says that there is a new beginning, there is a fresh start that lies ahead of us. Today as we come to James 3, I want to talk about how can you and I this next year, how can we experience a fresh start, how can we experience a freshness to this new year, and when we get to James 3 we're going to be looking at verses 11 and 12.

Now allow me to kind of give you the particulars here. The book of James is a struggle within the Bible because it marries this concept that that which we believe, that which we profess must be accompanied by our actions. It's the book of James that says don't just be a hearer of the word but be a doer of the word. When we get to chapter 3 in particular, by the way, you'll be grateful that this is not actually the particular subject matter of today, all of chapter 3 is about controlling the tongue, that here is this instrument that is so small in size but can cause so much destruction when it is used erroneously. The book of James 3 begins with these illustrations that we take mighty ships and we control them with the smallest of rudders, we take the most powerful of animals and just a simple instrument we can control the direction of which they travel. But that tongue that nothing, not even the fires of hell itself can seem to control it.

When we get to verses 11 and 12 of James 3, there's another series of illustrations and I know in particular it's in regards to the tongue but I want to take these illustrations today and I want to extrapolate a concept that I think each and every one of us desperately needs to hear particularly on this day. Verse 11 it says,

11 Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? 12
Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can
no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.

That illustration in verse 12 toward the end basically says that when you have a water source and that water is coming out of it, it will either produce fresh water or salt water, it does not initially produce a mixture of the two. And so today, this is one of those days where we're at the beginning source of a new year. This is a time where we have a new start to things and so I want to talk about from this illustration how can you and I experience the freshness of a new year, the freshness of a clean start with the Lord, and I'm going to use that a simple acronym today.

Let's begin with this concept: in order for you to have the new year that you truly desire to have, the first thing you're going to have to do, and this is one of the toughest things, is you're going to have to forget. You're going to have to forget the heartache, the disappointments, the shortcomings, the struggles, the things that have occurred not just in the previous calendar year but in days past that hinder you, they hold you back, they keep you from going forward because you can't go forward because all you do is dwell on what either did or did not happen in days past. You see, this is man's propensity. Humanity has this propensity to dwell upon and soak ourselves with the disappointment of days past whether it's somebody else's hand or our own.

You know, one of the most successful movies not just of this last calendar year but in recent modern history is actually a sequel to the famous movie "Top Gun" entitled "Maverick." Now I know that there might be one or two of you that have not seen the movie and I'm not here to spoil the movie but to be quite honest with you, you should have seen it by now so here we go. [laughter] That being said, the sequel is obviously around Maverick, this character, this fighter pilot, and I won't go into all the details, but do you know what the underlying theme of the entire sequel is? It is will he ever get over his past? For those of you that have seen the original, the loss of life of his partner and his best friend, the one who he trusted his life with each and every day, an untimely, unfortunate death, and basically the theme of the second movie is will he become who he's supposed to be by finally "forgetting" and going forward with his life?

That's our propensity but can I share with you God's perspective this morning? Do you know in the book of 1 John 1:9 it makes this statement: if we confess our sins to God, he is faithful and he is just to forgive us. Now we love that verse because we say, "That's right, God has forgive me of all that mess," the problem is you know he's forgiven but you struggle with forgetting. We struggle with the days past. We struggle with the heartache and the pain. But can I give you another verse? The book of Psalms 103:12, it says that when God forgave you, he separated your sins as far as the east is from the west.

Now you may not realize how powerful an illustration that is but if you had the means and the mechanisms today to go out on the interstate, you get in a vehicle of some choice and you were to start traveling north and you had the ability, no matter what the train was, just to continue heading north, there would come a point, now it would get very cold when you got there, but there would come a point where you would start heading south, but if you were to take that same vehicle and it could go over land and water and everything else and you were to head east, you could travel the entire circumference of the earth, over 24,000 miles, in fact, you could circle the earth numerous times and you would never once be headed west.

So what happens here is what the Lord says, "I've forgiven you," how many times and I've fallen into this trap, how many times have you gone to the Lord and said, "I cannot believe I messed up again"? "I cannot believe I've fallen. I cannot believe it. God, I know that this has got to be the thousandth time I've come before you." Do you know what his response is based on that passage? "This is the first time I've ever heard about it. What are you talking about?" You know, in the book of Micah tucked there in the middle of your Old Testament, little minor prophet, chapter 7, the Israelites are looking back not just on a lifetime, not just a couple of generations, they're literally looking back on the entirety of their history and if you've read the Old Testament it's not a pretty picture, they continually fall short, they continually fail, they continue not to trust God in so many things and they come before him in Micah 7 and they're like, "God, we're coming before you but we don't deserve it." Do you know what God says in verse 19 of Micah 7? He says, "Don't worry, I've taken your sins and I've placed them in the sea of forgetfulness." You see, you and I have a propensity to dwell on the ills of the past but God's perspective is, "Hey, if I've forgiven you, I have forgotten it." Rather than dwelling in the past, we need to go forward.

So what's the second thing we need to do? We need to remember. We need to remember the favor of God, the blessings of God, the times and the ways in which he has moved in our lives, but here's the problem, this is man's propensity, when I say that we need to remember how God has moved, let me tell you what typically happens with humanity because these two concepts are necessary. In order to forget, you've got to remember. In order to remember, you've got to forget. So let me give you a little illustration. You may be familiar with this. It goes a little something like this. I want you right now to not think of the number 9. Everybody is thinking about 9. Why? Because that's how we typically respond to this. All right, I'm not going to go back to the past so I'm going to start my year by not thinking about my mess-ups. What do you spend all day doing? Thinking about your mess-ups. Man's propensity is trying to remember God's favor in the midst of reminding ourselves of that which we should have forgotten.

You know, in the same book of James a few pages to the left in chapter 1, it says that all the good things in our life come to us from the Father of lights who has blessed us and he has cared for us, and one of the things that you may or may not have done in your life is to create a tangible means of remembering how God has blessed and taken care of, and one of the things I've learned with age is oftentimes when you look back in time, you

didn't realize that God was moving but he was orchestrating everything behind the scenes. You didn't realize it.

Another one of my favorite movies, not a sequel but a movie that probably most of you may not even be familiar with, it's a movie that was made decades ago, it's a movie about a group of Harvard students. They were in their last semester. They were just about to graduate. They had to turn in their thesis and one of the young students in the process of kind of navigating his paper, he lost groups of it, it went down kind of one of the boiler systems and there was a man, he was a homeless man, he was a vagrant that Harvard University had no idea was living on the campus, he acquires this thesis and here's a man who needs shelter, here's a man that needs food, here's a man that needs a lot of things that this Harvard student has in abundance, and so they form a very unlikely partnership. This Harvard student will provide the things this vagrant needs in exchange for one or two pieces of paper of his thesis at a time. The entire movie is about this unique partnership but there's a scene that just grabs me. They're walking across the campus of Harvard University and this vagrant man, a man who appears to have nothing physically going for him, he doesn't have a home, he doesn't have any place to store food for long-term, he has no family, he appears to be hopeless except he has a bag that he carries with him and he continually pulls that bag out of his pocket and there are these rocks, and he rubs them between his fingers on a regular basis and one day the Harvard student asked him, he said, "What are you doing? Why do you have those rocks?" It's a great scene, he says, "Well, this rock is the rock that I got on the beach the weekend my wife and I had our honeymoon together." She was no longer alive. Another rock represented his children, his success of days past. He used those tangible items to remember his life wasn't always the way that it was that day. There had been some "good times."

How do we apply this? What's God's perspective? How do we apply this to our life? You and I because of our difficulty, because of our struggle with forgetting and remembering, we've got to have something tangible that we can put our eyes on, put our hands on to remind us of what God has done not only just in days past but in days present. Now there's a lot of different options and, by the way, I'm not suggesting that we all go get a bag of rocks and start bringing them to church, but can I tell you what I and many others do? When we're studying scripture, when we're in a service like this, we write down what God showed us. Some people do it in a journal. I actually write in the pages of my Bible. I circle things. I underline. That's the way I do it and I have this really strange thing that I do, is that every two years I change Bibles. You say, "Why do you do that?" Because I don't want to get dependent on the things of days past, but at the same time I want to be able to remember them. I cannot tell you how many times I've been studying a passage of scripture, I've been in a Bible study, whatever it may be, and we're looking at a passage and I can think back years ago, I remember that God spoke to me through that passage and I'll go looking through all those Bibles on the shelf and I'll find the one with the notes. In a time in my life that might have seemed dark and grim and difficult, when I remember it with the beautiful God-given gift of hindsight do you know what I see? That God was moving all the time. He was working and he was orchestrating.

So for you and I today, number 1, we've got to forget the misfortunes and the shortcomings of the past. We have got to find a way to remember not only how God has been faithful in days past but how he's being faithful even in days present, and it may be years down the road when we look back and read what actually took place. Today, the beginning of a new year, if you are willing to walk out of here in a few moments and say, "I'm willing to do that. I'm willing to trust what God's word said. If he forgave it and he forgot it, then I'm willing to put it behind me and I'm willing to regularly remember when God has blessed and he has taken care of me," can I guarantee you what's going to happen next? You can expect that the enemy is going to strike. He's going to. You see, here's man's propensity, man's propensity is to walk out of here in a few moments and say, "Okay, I'm trusting God. I'm believing in God. God's got this so everything is going to be smooth." That's our propensity, is it not? Our propensity is to believe that if things are going well then we must be experiencing the favor of God, if things aren't going well then somehow, somehow, things must be sideways but here's the deal: when you go back and look at that remembering of what God did in days past, often what you thought was a grim season was a blessing season straight from God.

The enemy, you can expect he is going to strike. He doesn't want you to forget. In fact, some of you have heard this before: when Satan reminds you of your past, you need to remind him of his future. He will attack. Can I give you God's perspective? Ephesians 6, it's a famous passage where it talks about all the elements that a soldier would wear. There's this belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, helmet of salvation, the shield of faith, the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God, our feet being shod with the preparation of the gospel. It's a beautiful scene but do you know why God gives that to us is because it begins by saying we don't fight against flesh and blood but against principalities and rulers and powers of darkness. It says that we wrestle with the devil. Now let me give you God's perspective: the book of Ephesians was written to the church at Ephesus to people who already believed in Jesus Christ as their Savior. What you need to understand is that those who got up on the first day of the year and said, "Do you know what? We need to start this year at church." Those who said, "Do you know what? I need to read my Bible regularly. I need to pray. I need to be concerned about the things of God." God said, "Do you know what? If you are faithful to me, then you'd better get ready because the enemy is going to strike you." He's going to come at you so much you're going to need a shield of faith in the process, you're going to need a helmet of salvation, you're going to need the breastplate of righteousness, you're going to need the belt of truth to hold it all together, and you'd better have the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God because when he comes, he's like 1 Peter says, he is a roaring lion. He's not coming to nibble, he's coming to devour. There's an old adage, you may have heard it, it says if you wake up and you don't run into the devil face-to-face, then you might have been headed in the same direction that he was that day.

If you and I in just a moment say, "Do you know what? This new year we're going to trust God's word, we're going to forget the failures of days past, we're going to continue to remember how he has favored and he has blessed our lives throughout our life," then you can expect that the enemy is going to attack like he's never attacked before. You do remember last year we studied a character by the name of Job, right? Do you know what

the Bible says about Job? Twice God said, "He's perfect. He's upright. He is one who fears me. If anybody is doing it right, it's this guy." What did the devil say? "Oho, let me have him because I can promise you, God, he's only doing this because his life looks the way he wants it to." Remember what we discover in the book of Job? He was faithful. He stayed with it and God blessed him on the backside twice as much on the frontside.

We can expect that the enemy will attack so how do you and I need to respond? If we're going to have a fresh start, the next thing we need to do is we need to synergize. Now if you're not familiar with that word synergy, allow me to not only define it but explain it and illustrate it for you. The concept of synergy basically says that more than one individual, two people or a group of people can do more collectively together than if you added up the sum of all of their efforts. Here's a very simple illustration. Let's just say for the sake of illustration that you are able to lift 100 pounds and I'm able to lift 100 pounds, then together we can lift 200 pounds, but the principle of synergy says this, that if we were to acquire an item that weighs, say, 225 pounds, together we can actually lift more than we could individually apart. In other words, if we're going to forget and remember and expect the enemy to come prowling in our lives, we'd better synergize with one another, but do you know what man's propensity is? When things get tough we go into Lone Ranger syndrome, don't we? We don't want anybody to know our issues. We don't want anybody to know our struggles. We are just going to pretend that everything is all right.

Some of you may have noticed this about me, but on a regular basis whether it's on Sunday or midweek during the community, people come up to me and people say, "How are you doing?" Have you noticed I never say good? People ask me, "How are you doing?" Do you know what I say? "I'm here." I didn't lie, did I? How many times your life is falling apart and somebody goes, "How are you doing?" "Man, I've never been better," and on the inside you are dying from a thousand paper cuts of life. Why? Because that's our propensity. We don't want to be vulnerable. We don't want to be transparent. Do you know why? Because we can't forget that somebody burned us. You see, it all goes together, does it not? But do you know what God's perspective is? 1 Corinthians 12, he said, "For those who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, I've placed you in the body of Christ." What does that mean? That means that all of us have a part, all of us have a role. There are some of us that are knees, and some of us are elbows, and some of us are ears, and some of us are big toes, whatever it may be, but what that means is that we have been designed to operate to work together because last time I checked, if you have a "body" that is missing critical parts, it is very difficult to navigate this thing called life. You don't believe me? Just try breaking your little pinkie toe. Oh, you know you've done it. Middle of the night, get up, walk across and you hit the corner of a table or a chair, and you just sit there and go, "God, hold my tongue." We are in James 3, remember that? [laughter] Break that little pinkie toe, damage it, and all of a sudden you can't walk the way you used to walk and you think, "Man, I never noticed that thing except it's ugly and who knows how the toenail stays on it." You never noticed it until it's not there, and when it's not there you're missing it because we were designed to work together.

Let me give you some unfortunate statistical analysis. I know we all know the last couple of years we have navigated through what has been called a global pandemic. Here's the numbers that roughly about 30% of people who claim to be a believer in Jesus Christ, claim to be active in a local church pre-pandemic are nowhere to be found today. Do you know why? Because that's man's propensity. Life got tough, life got rough, it's not the way I hoped. I'm embarrassed. I don't want people to know and so I'm just going to check out and act like everything's okay. But do you know what? When the enemy strikes, that's when we need each other more than any other time in our life, and when we gather as a fellowship, as we gather as believers, we're here to encourage one another, we're here to hold each other accountable. Whether you realize it or not, we need each other when the enemy attacks. If you've ever seen the documentaries, the film, etc., when you look in days past of battles that actually looked the way that Ephesians 6 describes it, it's one thing to go into battle just you and your shield, how did the successful armies succeed? It's when they put their shields together and they created a synergized defense against what Ephesians 6 would say the fiery darts of the enemy.

So today, we have the opportunity to trust God and forget, we have the opportunity to remember that he has taken care of us along the way whether we realized it or not. We can walk out of here saying, "Okay, if I go forward with God I can expect the enemy to attack and I'm committed, I am committed to synergize, to be a part of the body of believers, to be one who encourages and is accountable both sides of the equation." So what's the last thing? This may not sound like a very theological concept but, boy, it will preach: you need to hang in there. You say, "What do you mean hang in there?" It means don't quit. It means don't give up. Do you know what the book of Daniel says about the enemy whom we know as Satan? He wants to "wear out the saints."

Let me give you man's propensity: when the going gets tough, the tough don't get going no matter what the song says. Usually they check out. You know, there's actually biblical evidence of this? You go throughout your Bible, Old Testament through the New Testament, and you begin to look at these key characters oftentimes given by names, there are men, there are women, who were faithful to the person of God, the things of God, look at their life at the end, look at those last years, look at that last decade, and what you'll notice is very few people actually hang in there. Very few people actually finish strong. This is why in 2 Timothy 4 the Apostle Paul makes this incredible statement, he says, "I have finished my course." Now why did he make such a big deal about it? Because very few people do. How many characters to you know in the Bible whose last years were not near as faithful to the Lord as their first years were? They fiddled out. They became faithless. They did not hang in there.

So what's God's perspective? Do me a favor and turn in your Bible one more page to the right, some of your Bibles it may actually be two pages, it's the book of 1 Peter 1. 1 Peter 1, I'm going to begin reading in verse 3. I want to give us a little perspective here and then I want to talk about God's perspective on "hanging in there." Verse 3 of 1 Peter 1 says,

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Boy, you want a couple of verses that you can hang your theological hat on. It says that because Jesus Christ lived, he died, and he rose from the grave, our sins can be forgiven, we know beyond a shadow of a doubt that when our last breath is breathed we won't blow open the doors of hell, we'll actually be in heaven, and he keeps us according to his power. Boy, that's some good stuff to preach but can I turn your attention to verses 6 and 7? Look at God's perspective,

6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:

Oh, time out. I thought I was kept by the power of God? I thought I've got a seat reserved in heaven? He said, oh, you've got all that but there are seasons in your life where you're going to have heaviness, you're going to have trials, verse 7,

7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

Can I share with you God's perspective? You see, this is the first day of a new year and we're going to walk out in just a moment and some of you are going to be ready to storm the gates of hell with a water pistol. You're going to be ready but do you know what's going to happen? Tomorrow. And the next day. And the next day. And do you know what's going to happen in your life? Seasons of difficulty. There are some things that are coming your way this year that you have no idea are coming. There are struggles you never dreamed of. There is heartache you could have never expected. And what's going to happen is that's going to occur and you're going to look back on this day and say, "Boy, pastor, you lied to me. You told me if I forget, remember, and expect and synergize, everything would be good." But God's perspective is for you to grow, for you to trust him more, for you to be the child of God that he needs you to be, you've got to go through the difficult times trusting him so that you might be molded and shaped to what he desires you to be.

I've made this statement numerous times to athletic teams, particularly football teams: championships are more often than not won in the off season. When you're willing to put in the time and the energy and the difficulty when nobody else is watching, when the lights are not on, when it's early in the morning and late at night, because one of the things that you discover in the weight room, one of the things you discover in the training room is this, that in order for you to be stronger physically you have to be willing to experience physical pain in your muscles. For you to be able to run further and longer,

you've got to be willing to run until you cannot run anymore. Why? Because once you hit that breaking point, God has wired us physically miraculously for our muscles to heal and for our body to do the things it does so that our body basically says, "We ain't doing that again."

So what happens? You see these big old boys out there, they can lift 300 pounds and that's impressive, you do realize they all started with 45, right? That's how much the bar weighs. 45 pounds then becomes 50. 50 becomes 55. It becomes 60. And years down the road, they're lifting weight they could have never dreamed of previously because they were willing to hang in there. This week, more of you will go to the gym than you've gone in the last year, [laughter], and I can guarantee what's going to happen: you're going to get on that elliptical, you're going to get on that treadmill, you're going to get on that bench press, oh, you hadn't been since last January and do you know what's going to happen? You're going to be in there, man, you're going to be going at it, you're going to feel good. Man, new start, fresh start. Do you know what's going to happen about two days later? You're going to wake up, you're going to hurt so bad Icy Hot ain't gonna fix it and do you know what you're going to do? The same thing the gyms hope you'll do: quit coming but keep paying the bill. That's why they want it automatically drafted. Quit coming because it hurts. I've got news for you, what does scripture say? For us to become who God's designed us to be we've got to be willing to trust him in the tough times, the difficult times, because he's using those not as an obstacle but an opportunity to shape us into what he has designed us to be.

Today is a very special day. We're gathered here in this place, at this time, on this day of the calendar and we have the opportunity for a fresh start. We have the opportunity to come back next year and say, "Guess what? I forgot about it. I remembered. I knew it was coming. I gathered with other believers and I didn't quit. I hung in there." You and I today have an opportunity God has given us that is very rare to join on this day not of the calendar year but also of the week for us to have a fresh start. It would be a shame if we didn't take advantage of it.

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. As we gather in this place, maybe you're that individual that the Spirit of God took the word of God and really did a surgical procedure spiritually in your life. Maybe you're that believer today who said, "You're right, I'm not trusting God, I need to lay it aside like he did." Maybe you're that believer today who says, "Do you know what? I need to remember God has been good to me in spite of what it looks like." Maybe you're that believer who says, "Do you know what? I want to but I just don't need to quit." I don't know what it is that the Spirit of God spoke through the word of God to you but maybe you're that person today that whatever that is when you leave in just a moment you need to trust God with, but maybe today, maybe you're that individual who came into this place, watching online and listening on the radio, maybe you're that person who said, "Do you know what? In spite of all that I've been trying to do all this on my own, I've been trying to just pull myself up by the proverbial bootstraps, I've been trying to be good enough, I've been trying to be faithful enough and year after year it just never works out." The Bible says in the book of Romans 10 whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved and maybe today in your

life it's not about "staying in the race," maybe it's about starting the race. Maybe today it's about calling out to the Lord Jesus to forgive you of your sins and to save you and to begin that walk and that journey and that eternal life with him. If you're that person today, let me encourage you just to call out to him. It's not about checking off a box. It's not about jumping through hoops. It's not about joining a church or starting this or stopping that. When the Bible says call on the name of the Lord, that just means you cry out to him and you say, "Well, what do I cry out?" Your heart's cry. All you've got to do today is confess your sin condition and call upon the Lord Jesus to save you. Maybe your heart's cry today will go a little something like this. "God, today for the first time in my life I recognize my sinful state and condition. God, today I understand that I've been places I should have never been. God, I know I've done things I should have never done. And God, particularly in light of James 3, there are things I've said that should have never been spoken. And God, today you and you alone know the thoughts between my ears that should have never taken place. And God, I believe what your word says, it says the wages, the result of my sin is death, but it also says that the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ my Lord. So God, today I believe, I believe I've got a sin condition that only Jesus can solve. God, I believe today that Jesus Christ loved me so much that as we celebrated this last season, that he came on my behalf. God, I believe he lived a sinless life on my behalf. God, I believe that as we sang in those songs today that when he allowed himself to go to the cross and when he was nailed to it, he was bearing the pain and the punishment and the price of my sin. And God, today I believe that when Jesus Christ rose from the grave, he made it possible for my sin to be forgiven and my soul to be saved. God, today I don't have all the answers to all the issues and the struggles and the problems of this life, but I know this, I've got a sin problem that only Jesus can fix. So the best way I know how, I'm asking you to forgive me, I'm asking you to save me. God, I just want to turn my life over to you."

As our heads are still bowed and our eyes are still closed, we've made a lot about this being the first day of the year. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5 that when we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ we become a new creature, a new creation. Maybe today is the day where you called on the name of the Lord and you became that new creation, in a moment I'm going to pray for us, we're going to stand and sing together, and I just want to invite you just to step out and step forward. We have a whole team set aside who just wants to pray with you, pray for you, and celebrate what God has done in your life.

Lord Jesus, as we come to this time of decision, God, thank you not just because the calendar says that it's a new year but thank you that your word says that we can be a new creation through Christ Jesus. Thank you that you are the one who gives us the new birth, you are the one who forgives us and saves us and redeems us and reconciles us to yourself. God, today thank you that we don't have to be on the first day of a calendar year to have a fresh start with you, we just have to call upon you. Lord, today may whatever that means in our life, may we simply respond appropriately. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.