

New Year's Eve 2021 – Meditation

Texts of Hope

Genesis 9: 8-17

⁸Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, ⁹“As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, ¹⁰and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. ¹¹I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.” ¹²God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: ¹³I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, ¹⁵I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” ¹⁷God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”

Ruth 1: 16

But Ruth said,
“Do not press me to leave you
or to turn back from following you!
Where you go, I will go;
where you lodge, I will lodge;
your people shall be my people,
and your God my God.

Josuah 1: 1-6a

After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying, ²“My servant Moses is dead. Now proceed to cross the Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the Israelites. ³Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, as I promised to Moses. ⁴From the wilderness and the Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, to the Great Sea in the west shall be your territory. ⁵No one shall be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. ⁶Be strong and courageous. successful wherever you go.

Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:
²a time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;
³a time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to break down, and a time to build up;
⁴a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
⁵a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together;
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
⁶a time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to throw away;
⁷a time to tear, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
⁸a time to love, and a time to hate;
a time for war, and a time for peace.

Matthew 15: 21-28

Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²² Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon." ²³ But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, "Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us." ²⁴ He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." ²⁵ But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." ²⁶ He answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." ²⁷ She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." ²⁸ Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed instantly.

John 5: 2-9

Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Beth-zatha, which has five porticoes. ³ In these lay many invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed ⁵ One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. ⁶ When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be made well?" ⁷ The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me." ⁸ Jesus said to him, "Stand up, take your mat and walk." ⁹ At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk.

2 Timothy 1: 3-7

³ I am grateful to God—whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did—when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. ⁴ Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. ⁵ I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you. ⁶ For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; ⁷ for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.

Revelations 21: 1-5

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

"See, the home of God is among mortals.

He will dwell with them;

they will be his peoples,

and God himself will be with them;

⁴ he will wipe every tear from their eyes.

Death will be no more;

mourning and crying and pain will be no more,

for the first things have passed away."

⁵ And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true."

Meditation

God is there with us, every moment of our lives. Let us fill our souls tonight with hope. Let us follow God's invitation to listen and reflect. Let us eventually take the first steps into a new year and move on with courage and faith.

At the end of this past year let us remember that there is indeed at "time for everything".

It is almost over. In a few hours the year ends. 2021 will be gone. Our words, our thoughts, our deeds will be in the past. Tomorrow we begin anew. Tonight, and tomorrow, and every day that lies before us, God offers us life and hope.

New Year's Eve can bring up feelings of hope, wonder, & pride – but also guilt, regret, and disappointment. This mix of emotions is normal – but how do we learn from it? And how do we move on with it?

As there is a time for everything, this tonight is a wonderful time to reflect.

May I invite you to re-play through the past year in your mind, slowly, as if you were watching a movie with all its big and small moments...

Start with New Year's Eve 2021.

Where you here in the yard with us?

Or where were you?

Now move through the year month by month: January, February, March – the lockdown, the fears and hopes, the anxiety, the big and small joys...

Recall people, moments, emotions, activities, details, mistakes, highlights — all of it.

How was spring, Easter?

Remember when the vaccines came on the market? When we got a bit more freedom through sinking Covid numbers?

Just play through the months little by little.

Let the moments of early summer come... Stay with each moment for a while before moving onto the next.

Now, begin to settle your attention on your biggest challenge from this year. In what ways did this experience, person, or situation challenge you?

What would you have done differently?

What did you learn from it? How did it shape you and those who you live with?

Now, begin to focus your attention on your favourite moments from the last year. Recall them, search for them, find them, hold them at the centre of your mind and take them in through all of your senses.

Replay these moments in your mind's eye.

An exam passed, a new place to live, a new job, one of those rare trips possible, a reunion with family, birth & baptism... Political changes...

Don't rush this part — recall how it all felt, what hopes you had, what overwhelming joys, what moments of utter happiness?

Feel them again.

Hold fast to them as you walk through the rest of your year...

Remember summer, autumn, and the winter months.

When you reach the end of December, try to finish the movie, and notice how you feel.

Stay there for another minute, and then slowly transition your mind back into the present moment, here in this church...

When you tune into all that mattered to you over the last year – the little things that mattered and the huge things that mattered – you begin to get clear on how you hope to spend your time in the future.

Take with you what mattered and what you loved; and leave behind you what burdened you and exhausted you.

And in all that, remember the rainbow & God's promise to care for us. Identify with Joshua and the great encouragement he received.

Rejoice in the friendship of Ruth and Naomi and hold fast to the happiness it can bring when you care for someone and do not leave the person alone. See, how God is in all the love we give, and remember that there are times for everything: times for the bright colours of life and the greys and the shades.

Take courage from the stories of healing which we all know. Take your mat and walk when it's time for it. Be rooted in the circle of friends and family. Never forget, that God has given us a spirit of power and love and thoughtfulness. And believe in the new heaven and earth which are not only promised to us in a far distant future, but which want to begin here and now. Look around in this very moment and see how blessed we are.