



I TRUST in you,
LORD...

My TIMES are in
your HANDS (Ps. 31:14-15)



Messiah
LUTHERAN CHURCH & SCHOOL
Church of the Lutheran Confession

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December 31, 2023

New Year's Eve

Grace for the Past, Present, and Future!

As the world around us gathers this evening for a grand celebration, what are they celebrating? Is the advancing of a digit on the calendar necessarily such a happy thing? Behind all the noise, God has something to say, and it is relevant no matter the date or the age. But who is listening? It is the way of the world and our way by nature to despise preaching and God's Word. God calls all this night to awaken and listen to His saving Word, to hold it sacred, and to gladly hear and learn it. For only then can we be assured of the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. In God's Word alone we remain awake and ready for our entrance into the eternal joy of the day of resurrection and eternal life.

HYMN 899: *Across the Sky the Shades of Night*

INVOCATION

Pastor: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Cong: Amen.

PSALM (*Psalm 90:1–12*)

- Pastor: Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting You are God.
- Cong: **You return man to dust and say, “Return, O children of man!” For a thousand years in Your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night.**
- Pastor: You sweep them away as with a flood; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning: in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers.
- Cong: **For we are brought to an end by Your anger; by Your wrath we are dismayed. You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your presence.**
- Pastor: For all our days pass away under Your wrath; we bring our years to an end like a sigh. The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away.
- Cong: **Who considers the power of Your anger, and Your wrath according to the fear of You? So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.**

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning,
is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION [Adapted from *Concordia Pulpit Resources*]

- Pastor: It’s the eve of a new year. The old has gone; the new has come. Or has it?
- Don’t we tend to drag all our old worries and fears and problems into the new year with us? And then we look ahead and wonder—and perhaps even fear—what the new year will bring, whether joy or sorrow, blessing or trouble, sickness or health.
- The beginning of a new year can be exciting and fresh. It can also be daunting and depressing as we realize the things we should have said, should have accomplished, or on the other hand, those things we should not have said or done.

The new year gives us a time for pause and reflection. A good way for us to reflect is to use God's own Word as a mirror, to show us ourselves as we look according to God's Law.

We are going to use the Catechism to help us reflect and repent this evening. I'll read the commandment and the question, "What does this mean?" You'll respond with the explanation. We'll then take a moment to reflect silently on the past year and to confess our sins according to each commandment.

The First Commandment—You shall have no other gods. What does this mean?

People: **We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.**

Pastor: Where has your trust been this year? Where will it be in the coming year? We take a few moments to reflect on this commandment and to repent of our sins.

Pause for silent reflection.

Pastor: The Second Commandment—You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain. What does this mean?

People: **We should fear and love God that we do not use His name to curse, swear, practice witchcraft, lie, or deceive; but we should call upon His name in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.**

Pastor: How have you used God's name this past year? How can you use it appropriately in the coming year? We pause to reflect and repent.

Pause for silent reflection.

Pastor: The Third Commandment—Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. What does this mean?

People: **We should fear and love God that we do not despise His word and the preaching of it; but we should regard God's word as holy and gladly hear and learn it.**

Pastor: This commandment is about the Word of God. What part has the Word of God played in your life this past year? Have you despised preaching? Have you regularly and diligently studied the Word? What about in the coming year? We pause to reflect and repent.

Pause for silent reflection.

HYMN 609:1-4: *Jesus Sinners Doth Receive*

Pastor: The Fourth Commandment begins the second table of the Law which commands love for our neighbor—You shall honor your father and your mother that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth. What does this mean?

People: **We should fear and love God that we do not despise nor anger our parents or superiors; but we should honor, serve, and obey them, and give them love and respect.**

Pastor: We all have or had parents. We are all subject to a variety of authorities. This commandment applies to us all, not only to the children among us. What has your relationship with parents and authorities been like this year? How might it change in the year ahead? We pause to reflect and repent.

Pause for silent reflection.

Pastor: The Fifth Commandment—You shall not murder. What does this mean?

People: **We should fear and love God that we do not hurt nor harm our neighbor's body; but we should help and be a friend to him in every bodily need.**

Pastor: This seems like such an easy commandment to keep, that is, until we understand it in its fullness as Luther expounds it in his explanation. Then we find that it's not so easy. Whom have you hurt or harmed? Whom have you failed to help? Will this change in the new year? We pause to reflect and repent.

Pause for silent reflection.

Pastor: The Sixth Commandment—You shall not commit adultery. What does this mean?

People: **We should fear and love God that we live a pure and decent life in words and actions, and that husband and wife love and honor one another.**

Pastor: Again, this one seems pretty easy, but then we hear what Jesus tells us: "I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart." This commandment has to do also with our thoughts and words and not only our actions. Our lives and hearts are to be pure and decent. How have you broken this

commandment this year, and what can you do differently in the year ahead? We pause to reflect and repent.

Pause for silent reflection.

Pastor: The Seventh Commandment—You shall not steal. What does this mean?

People: **We should fear and love God that we do not take our neighbor's money or possessions, nor get them in a dishonest way; but we should help him to improve and protect his property and way of making a living.**

Pastor: Like the Fifth and Sixth Commandments, this is bigger than it seems. Most of us don't out-and-out steal things. But the explanation helps us see our guilt here as well. Read again the explanation and examine yourself. What have you done or not done? What will you do or not do? We pause to reflect and repent.

Pause for silent reflection.

Pastor: The Eighth Commandment—You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. What does this mean?

People: **We should fear and love God that we do not tell lies about our neighbor, betray him, or say anything that might ruin his good name and reputation; but we should defend him, speak well of him, and explain all his words and actions in the best possible way.**

Pastor: This commandment does not apply just in court. Instead, it applies to every moment of every day. We have so many opportunities to tear down or to build up the people in our lives. Take a moment and reflect and repent regarding the way you speak to people and about people.

Pause for silent reflection.

Pastor: The Ninth and Tenth Commandments are both about coveting. We'll take them together. The Ninth Commandment—You shall not covet your neighbor's house. What does this mean?

People: **We should fear and love God that we do not sinfully desire to get our neighbor's inheritance or house by a trick or in a way that appears to be right; but we should do everything we can to help him keep what is his.**

- Pastor: The Tenth Commandment—You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, his workers, nor his animal, nor anything that is your neighbor’s. What does this mean?
- People: **We should fear and love God that we do not sinfully desire to use tricks or force, or do anything that might cause our neighbor to lose his wife, workers, or animals; but we should urge them to stay and do their duty.**
- Pastor: Coveting. What a challenge this is in our lives. Always wanting more than God has given. Always desiring that which belongs to another. Take a few moments and reflect on the covetousness of your heart.

Pause for silent reflection.

Pastor: When we use these Ten Commandments and their explanations to reflect on our past year and look ahead to the next, we find that we are truly sinful and that we need to confess these sins to God, our heavenly Father.

People: O almighty God, merciful Father,
I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of Your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being.

HYMN 609:5-7: *Jesus Sinners Doth Receive*

Pastor: Having confessed our sins together, take to heart the Lord’s words of promise, comfort, forgiveness, and life:

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 6:23).

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Is. 53:4-6).

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (Jn. 3:14-18).

If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:31-39).

Nothing, not even our sin when it is acknowledged and confessed, can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. As Paul says, God gave up His Son for us all. He died and rose again. He has ascended and is now interceding at His Father’s right hand. In this same Jesus Christ, in the forgiveness that comes through Him alone, we are more than conquerors.

In this way, we can enter the new year, not dragging our burdens of sin with us, but free through Him who gives us strength.

With this in mind, receive the absolution of your sins: Upon this, your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: **Amen.**

HYMN 896: *Now Greet the Swiftly Changing Year*

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Pastor: Let us pray.
Eternal God, we commit to Your mercy and forgiveness the year now ending and commend to Your blessing and love the times yet to come. In the new year, abide among us with Your Holy Spirit that we may always trust in the saving name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

People: **Amen.**

CONFESSION OF FAITH (Augsburg Confession: Article III)

I believe that the Word--that is, the Son of God--took on man's nature in the womb of the blessed virgin Mary. So there are two natures, divine and human, inseparably conjoined in the unity of His person, one Christ, true God and true man, who was born of the virgin Mary, truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, that He might reconcile the Father to us and be a sacrifice not only for original guilt but also for all actual sins of men. He also descended into hell, and on the third day truly rose again. Afterward He ascended into heaven to sit on the right hand of the Father, forever reign and have dominion over all creatures, and sanctify those who believe in Him by sending the Holy Spirit into their hearts to rule, comfort, and quicken them and defend them against the devil and the power of sin. The same Christ will openly come again to judge the living and the dead. Amen.

HYMN 897: *O Rejoice, Ye Christians, Loudly*

OFFERING AND LORD'S PRAYER

HOLY COMMUNION

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

P: Our Lord Jesus Christ, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to His disciples, saying, "Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me."

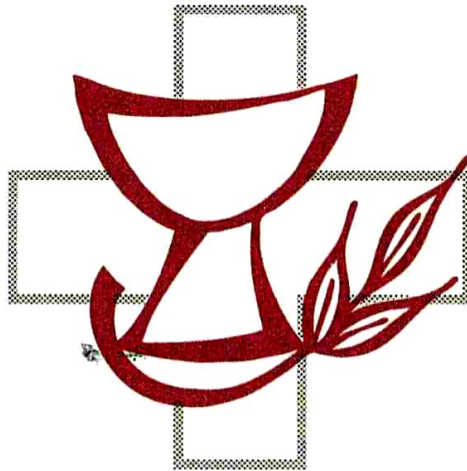
After the same manner also He took the cup after supper, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the New Testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the remission of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

P: The peace of the Lord be with you always!

C: Amen.

DISTRIBUTION

DISTRIBUTION HYMN 624: *The Infant Priest Was Holy Born*

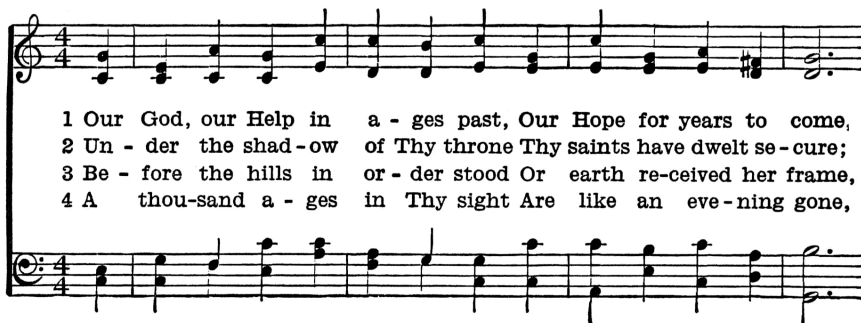


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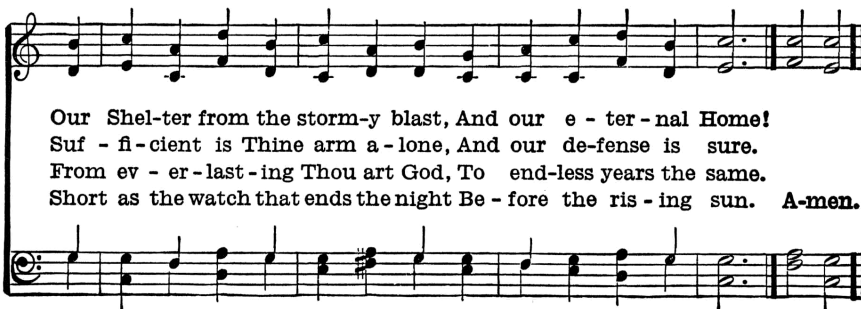
Our God, Our Help in Ages Past

Ps. 90
Isaac Watts, 1719, ab.

St. Anne
William Craft, 1708



1 Our God, our Help in a - ges past, Our Hope for years to come,
2 Un - der the shad - ow of Thy throne Thy saints have dwelt se - cure;
3 Be - fore the hills in or - der stood Or earth re - ceived her frame,
4 A thou - sand a - ges in Thy sight Are like an eve - ning gone,



Our Shel - ter from the storm - y blast, And our e - ter - nal Home!
Suf - fi - cient is Thine arm a - lone, And our de - fense is sure.
From ev - er - last - ing Thou art God, To end - less years the same.
Short as the watch that ends the night Be - fore the ris - ing sun. A - men.

5 Thy word commands our flesh to dust:

“Return, ye sons of men!”

All nations rose from earth at first

And turn to earth again.

6 Time, like an ever-rolling stream,

Bears all its sons away;

They fly forgotten as a dream

Dies at the opening day.

7 Like flowery fields the nations stand,

Pleased with the morning light;

The flowers beneath the mower's hand

Lie withering ere 'tis night.

8 Our God, our Help in ages past,

Our Hope for years to come,

Be Thou our Guard while troubles last

And our eternal Home!

PRAYER (Spoken in unison)

Lord God, heavenly Father, because You sent us Your only-begotten Son for our salvation and gave Him the name of Jesus, grant that we may begin the new year trusting in His saving name, and live all our days in His service and praise. Amen.

BENEDICTION:

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: Amen.

CLOSING HYMN 922: *Go, My Children, with My Blessing*