

"New Year, New You"

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1 January 2023 (1 Christmas, Year A)

(The Holy Name of the Lord Jesus Christ)

Today is cause for celebration

It's the first Sunday of Christmas, which is why we just read about some of the events that preceded and followed the birth of Jesus.

It's also New Year's Day—the start of a new year. It's a time of renewal; a time when many people enjoy the idea of having a new slate. It's a chance to leave our sinful ways in the past and move on to better days ahead. To say goodbye to our demons and hello to our better angels.

It's unusual for the first Sunday after Christmas to fall on New Year's Day. According to Wikipedia, it'll only happen 11 times this century and has only happened 11 times per century dating back to the year 1702. In the 1600s, there are 10 times on record.

But while unusual, in many ways it feels appropriate. As with New Year's Day, Christ's birth also brings us a new timeline. In many ways, he gives us a new slate, and, of course, by his eventual death on the cross, he gives us the ultimate clean slate in dying for our sins. Yet, even before that, by his birth, he offers a way for us to leave our sinful ways in the past and move on to better days ahead.

For one thing, by the coming of Jesus, we close the Old Testament of the Bible and begin chapter one of the New Testament.

We also start a new dating system in the year of Our Lord. Gone is the era of Before Christ. Everything that happens from this point on carries the significance of taking place after the birth of Christ. It's through Jesus that we learn we can have a more personal relationship with God. We can call Him father. And we can talk to Jesus as a friend. Additionally, it's through the parables that Jesus gives us that we realize how we can apply God's will onto our lives.

Jesus is who we've been waiting for, and now we can better understand our present while we look to the future. So it's fitting for our first Sunday after Christmas to fall on the first day of a new year. This is an opportunity for us all to consider how we've been living our lives, whether we've been following God's will, and, if not, what we're going to do about it. Are we living for God, or are we living for ourselves?

This morning, as we switch over our calendars and open our new yearly planners and perhaps consider if we'll take on any New Year's Resolutions, let us also consider how we've been living. It's customary for us to look over the previous year whenever a new year starts. We might delight in the things we accomplished or despair in things that went wrong. Maybe 2022 was a tough year for you and you're hoping that 2023 will bring new and exciting opportunities. Or maybe you're hoping you'll finally start that project you've been putting off for years, lose those last ten pounds, start eating healthier food, or even become a better person.

A new year offers a chance for us to consider what we want to keep in our lives and what we don't. So, it's fitting that on this New Year's Day, we have the reminder that of God's love for the world in being willing to send His son to live among us and then ultimately die for our sins. Through Christ's life, we can better know God, and through his death, we can have the chance to eventually be with God.

As you head into this new year with your blank slate and your list of goals, remember that you're not in this alone. Jesus is there to walk alongside you and demonstrate how we might be better by praying for a better understanding of God's will for us and in our lives.