

**“RESOLUTIONS”**  
**(Colossians 3:12-17, 23-24)**

1.5.20

**INTRODUCTION**

I was actually originally planning a different message for today, one that brought us back into our big questions. But God poked me in another direction, so here we are.

Last week, kind of to catch everybody up, we talked about going boldly into a new year, obviously going boldly where no one has gone before. Unlike the past, the New Year stretches out before us with virtually nothing known. Yet we talked about how we can be bold as we head into that great unknown because, truth be told, there is Somebody who has gone on ahead of us into this New Year. God our Father, because of the relationship we have with Him through Jesus Christ, knows everything about what is ahead for all of us.

So, with that wonderful reality in mind, we talked about three (3) things to celebrate and claim as we move forward, three things we can count on as sure things no matter how much else is unknown about 2020:

- 1) Jesus Christ is ever present with us: ***“[S]urely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” — Jesus Christ, Matthew 28:20b.*** We are not on our own, and we will never be left alone, like some kind of helpless orphans, to fend for ourselves. And regardless of what lies ahead, as David wrote so well: ***Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me — David, Psalms 23:4a.*** There is no time that won’t find our Savior right beside us.
- 2) Jesus Christ is ever praying to God on our behalf; as Paul told us: ***Christ Jesus . . . is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us — Paul, Romans 8:34b.***
- 3) Jesus Christ is ever loving us; in fact, He wants us to continually be learning just how wondrous His love for us is. As Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus: ***I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge — that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God — Paul, Ephesians 3:16-19.***

Do you understand? God wants us to never forget the ever-present, ever-surrounding love of Jesus Christ, that that awareness would mark every step and every moment of our lives — this year and every year — that we would live boldly knowing that nothing *will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord* — *Paul, Romans 8:39b*.

All of these promises are gems, gifts from God himself, that we are invited to embrace as we step out into a new year. They are given to us, to be claimed and used over and over and over again. They surround us with the love of God AND the power of God. Both of those are incredibly important: While the love of God surrounds us, the power of God enables us. Remember what Paul told his friend Timothy: *For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline* — *Paul, II Timothy 1:7*. And both of those are features of the wonderful promise that Paul shared with the Philippian church as he was closing his letter to them: *[M]y God will meet all your needs according to the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus* — *Paul, Philippians 4:19*.

All of which leads us into the second part of our New Year's message. If the love of God and the power of God allow us to be bold as we enter a new year, what exactly should we be bold about? What should we literally “push” to accomplish? First, let's visit Paul's words to the Colossians again:

#### TEXT

*Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. . . . Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving* — *Paul, Colossians 3:12-17, 23-24*

So let's see what Paul is saying: First of all, God has chosen us; we are holy — different and separated from how the world lives and speaks and acts and reacts.

Because God has chosen us, because we are dearly loved and because we are holy, we are to put on, literally like settling into an overcoat, the virtues of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forbearance and forgiveness — modeling forgiveness after the example of Christ. And binding all these virtues together, into one literal garment? Love — which brings all these wonderful elements together. Because we are being literally swaddled by such a luxurious overcoat, we should live with a great inner peace, seeing as how we have found the best of all possible lives. And being blessed with living in that luxurious overcoat should make us the most thankful people on the planet.

And as we continue on, we should seek to have God’s message in all its forms singing and ringing and filling our hearts. That should make us constantly aware that everything we are able to do, we are having the opportunity to do it in the name of the Lord Jesus. It is ultimately the Lord Christ we are serving.

OK, so all of these things — all the virtues that reflect Christ, all the holiness that is to set us apart as belonging to Christ — are enabled by the power of God fortified by the love of God. And all that with which He supplies us should be a constant reminder of who we live for, who we speak for, who we respond for. We are ambassadors in the fulltime service of God through Jesus Christ. That is the mission for our lives and our church. We do “Jesus” here.

So what are some ways to do “Jesus?” In that context, what would our church’s New Year’s resolutions look like? Well, how about these:

## **APPLICATION**

Resolved: That we will —

- 1) Desire to know Jesus (from the apostle Paul, Philippians 3:10). We offer a whole lot of Bible learning here: Sunday School, Bible Blast, Soul Miners (every Sunday night at 6:30), Doctrine for Dummies (starting this Wednesday at 6:30), redoing End Times (starting a week from Tuesday at 6:30). The women of our church present Bible studies. But with all that going on, we need to understand something: We do not preach God’s word and do Bible studies and have Sunday School and Bible Blast because it is cute, or “churchy” or whatever. We do all those things because we are members of the Kingdom of God. And membership in the Kingdom of God is a relationship; it is a love story.
- 2) Make all our relationships pleasing to God. [“I love you guys” — individually as well as collectively.] You know what is supposed to make the church different from all other organizations? The church is supposed to

reflect Jesus. The church is supposed to act and react and speak like Jesus. And if something doesn't measure up to the bar that Christ has set? We make it right. Why? Because it is the Lord Christ we serve! If there has been a hurt, we want to assert that power and love we've talked about in healing that relationship. It doesn't matter where the hurt came from or what caused it or, in the vernacular of the world, "whose fault it is." Christians assert. We don't wait; we go after. How do I know that? Because Jesus didn't wait. He didn't wait until I was somehow worthy of His intervention. He came to earth to die precisely because I wasn't worthy. If that's the example we are supposed to reflect, then how can we do anything else but pursue healing? If there is a breach in a relationship between members of our family, we should literally see a collision between those two parties at the intersection of "forgiveness avenue" and "love street." I gotta tell you: One of the clearest pictures of the reality of Jesus Christ in a church is how the people in that church treat each other. Do those relationships remind people of how Christ related to people? They should. Now certainly there were relationships in play before I got here, which means that there were relationships damaged or broken before I got here. Where are those relationships now?

- 3) Fill our sanctuary. This is NOT about numbers. This is about the truth that is spoken here, and that truth maybe has never been made more clear than the truth the apostle Paul presented to the Colossian believers (and I love how the English Standard Version tells it): ***And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This He set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in Him — Paul, Colossians 2:13-15 (ESV).*** We're justified; we're "not guilty" by the work of what Christ did on the cross. By claiming that, by surrendering to that incredible offer of God's forgiveness, we no longer carry anything around by which Satan can accuse us. We're clean! That's the message that the world needs to hear: We can be seen by a perfect, holy God as being just as perfect and holy as He is by surrendering our lives to be filled by His Son's life! Now think about this: We all know somebody who is living outside the Kingdom of God. If each one of our family units here committed to inviting one person, or one family, to come here to experience God with us, just that by itself would fill some seats. But, more than that, it would bring more people under the teaching of the Word of God. And that's what we're

here for — at this time and this place: to impact this world with God through Jesus Christ.

## CONCLUSION

Now all these things we've talked about, all these things to do, are based on our being a part of this love story we call the life in Christ. You see, the only way pursuing these things becomes a problem is if there is competition. The only way we wind up, as the old saying goes, "between a rock and a hard place," is if Christ has competition for who sits on the throne of our lives. If our hearts are divided between loving the Son or somebody else, that's a problem. And our lives will never know success as God rates success, our lives will never know blessing as only God can bless, unless He owns us — completely. If ownership is still up in the air, then our lives will never be all God intends for them to be, all He desires them to be.

More than that, we are denying who our Master truly is. Remember what Paul wrote to the church at Corinth? *You are not your own; you were bought at a price — Paul, I Corinthians 6:19b-20a.* If you have surrendered to Christ, you now belong to Christ. That means His will, His plans, His directions, His responses, His attitudes, His virtues — all those things become ours.

And now, we get to show our love for each other in a very specific way.  
[PRAYER NET!!! — make sure only those who have participated draw names]

Let's pray!