

JANUARY 2010

To the people of God at Our Redeemer,

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!! Malinda, the girls, and I wish to extend greetings to all our family in Christ during this Christmas Season. During this time of year, we tend to reminisce about the past and look forward to the future. We make resolutions. If you are like me, you can make the same resolutions every year, because certain things seem to never get resolved. I have been resolving to get under 200 pounds each year since 1996.

Recent milestones have caused me to wax nostalgic. Christmas Day marked fourteen and one half years in the ministry. That sounds like an odd milestone, but, even if I preach full time until age 70, this means one-third of my ministry is behind me.

The Lord has blessed me with the opportunity to serve Him in His Church. I am thankful for the opportunity to serve here at Our Redeemer. God is leading us on the path of His choosing. We never know where that path will lead, but that is neither a reason to fear or worry. Our place is in the present and in eternity. We live in the present time, and God has destined us for eternity.

There is nothing wrong with occasionally reminiscing about the past. It is good to remember our loved ones now with the Lord, the blessings we have received, and the strength given to us to endure the difficult times. But if dwelling on the past becomes paralyzing to the present, it is not useful.

Likewise, spending our days in dreamy hopes for the future or paralyzing fears of the future separates us from the joy and work of the present, and, to an extent, it separates us from God. God desires for us to focus on what is needful in the present for us be of service to His Kingdom on earth, and to be prepared each day for the reality of eternity. Spending my days resting on the laurels of past accomplishments, or flailing myself for past failures, or dreaming about what I might do during the last two-thirds of my ministry would keep me from doing my work in the present.

This does not mean that we do not remember the past or plan for the future. When Martin Luther was asked what he would do if he knew Christ was returning tomorrow, he answered, "I would plant an apple tree." Our task is to do the work today that lends service to Christ and His Church, and, in doing so, much like with Luther's apple tree, we help to provide for the future.

During the first two Advent mid-week services, I read a prayer at the end of the service: "Lord God, You have called Your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go but only that Your hand is leading us and Your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen."

In Christ,

Pastor Eden