

December 31, 2008

Messiah

Psalm 31:15

New Year's Eve (Naming/Circumcision)

Our Days are in Your Hands, O Lord

Introduction

1. In Psalm 31, by divine inspiration, King David writes these words, "I trust in You, O Lord; I say, 'You are my God.' My times are in your hands."
 2. What do these words mean to us sitting here in the Lord's house on this New Year's Eve, at the close of 2008?
 3. What do these words mean to you:
 - a. Who may have had a very difficult past year
 - b. Who may have endured surgeries
 - c. Who may have endured heart-break of family and children
 - d. Who may have endured deep depression and great anxiety
 4. "I trust in You, O Lord; I say, 'You are my God.' My times are in your hand."
 5. What do these words mean to us sitting here in the Lord's house on this New Year's Eve, at the close of 2008?
 6. What do these words mean to you:
 - a. Who look ahead to a new year
 - b. As we look ahead to a new governing administration in our nation
 - c. As we look ahead making decisions that impact our lives
 - d. As we look ahead with a troubled world of warfare and financial unrest
 7. "I trust in You, O Lord; I say, 'You are my God.' My times are in your hands."
- I. However, according to Isaiah in our Old Testament Reading – rather than having our times in His hands, one would think God would rather “wash His hands” of all of us**
- A. I don't know about you, but as I think back to 2008 – I can recount a number of times I have rebelled against God
 - i. Isaiah says Israel is a lying people – they do not tell the truth
 - ii. He says Israel is a people who are “unwilling to hear the instruction of the Lord”
 - iii. He says Israel says to the prophets and pastors, “Don't preach God's Word to us”
 - iv. Isaiah says instead of returning to the Lord – Israel is like one who gets on a fast horse and flees in the opposite direction from God – even as our very nature is rebellious against God
 - B. Our 2008 has been filled with sin
 - i. We have failed and we have gone against God
 - ii. We too have lied – to God, and to each other
 - iii. We too have not wanted to hear God's Word: our devotional life is dismal, coming to church is often begrudgingly
 - iv. We too want to live a certain way which we know is often against God's Word and His Commandments, and yet, we race in the opposite direction, saying, “I will do as I please”

- C. And at the end of 2008, through the mouth of Isaiah, God calls us to return to Him – to REPENT
 - i. Remember Pontius Pilate who washed His hands of Jesus, giving Him up over to death?
 - ii. God is not like Pilate, God does not wash His hands of us
 - iii. But rather He holds His hands out to us, pleading with us to repent, to acknowledge our sins, to confess our wrongs, and to turn to Him

II. Turn to our Gospel Reading today, to the Infant Jesus...

- A. In Luke 2:21, Jesus is 8 days old
 - i. Today is the Eve of the Naming and circumcision of Jesus Christ
 - ii. According to the Law of God, from the time of Father Abraham, all male children, 8 days old would be circumcised
 - iii. Here Jesus begins to fulfill the entire Law of God for His fallen and rebellious people
 - iv. Here Jesus begins to shed His blood for the sins of the world
 - v. On that day of Circumcision, the male child was also given His “name”
- B. When Gabriel announced to Mary she was with child, Gabriel said, “And you will name Him JESUS”
 - i. When the angel came to Joseph in a dream, confirming that the child within Mary’s womb was truly from the Holy Spirit, the angel said, “And you will call Him JESUS”
 - ii. The name JESUS means “One who saves”
 - iii. Remember all those rebellious and sinful things we did in 2008, and in 2001, and 1982, and 1963, and 1954....
 - iv. This JESUS has come to save us
 - v. On His 8th Day, Jesus began shedding His blood, but on the cross it was poured out for the sins of the world – for you, for me, for all!
 - vi. On the Cross, the **HANDS OF JESUS WERE PIERCED** for our sins, and through the HANDS, life, death, and resurrection of God → all of our sins are forgiven and we are made right with God!

III. And so we can rejoice with St. Paul in Romans 8, confessing that **NOTHING shall ever be able to separate us from the HANDS of God**

- A. Those who do not believe, and those whose judgment is eternal hell is not because God did not open His hands to them with forgiveness and eternal life
 - i. These are they who have rejected the pierced hands of God for their eternal salvation

- ii. These are they who have thought the world, or another God, was better – only to deceive themselves!
- B. But through the eyes of God, and from His crucified HANDS, truly NOTHING shall ever be able to separate us from Him loving us!
- i. Has 2008 been a wild ride for you?
 - ii. From one of our members, I read Roger and Joann Drevlow's Christmas letter...
 - iii. They had a wild ride this 2008: stroke, heart surgery, hernia surgery, the death of a mother, therapy, resigning from work
 - iv. And in this letter, they witnessed their faith, they thanked their Messiah family for such outpouring of love, and they thanked God for being with them even in a most difficult year
 - v. And you – you too suffer the effects of this fallen world
- C. But let our ears hear God's Word as we contemplate 2008:
- i. "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. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ...
 - ii. 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 separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."
- D. Dear Christians, "Our days are in the hands of the Lord!"
- i. YOUR days – are in the hands of the Lord
 - ii. Through trial and tribulation – God will not desert you, but He will guide and lead you through the wilderness of our years
 - iii. Jesus Christ has triumphed! After His resurrection He showed Thomas and the others His pierced hands
 - iv. And today – This same Jesus continues to hold out His pierced hands to us, the hands of our salvation...
 - 1. as He is with us in the most blessed Sacrament of His body and blood...
 - 2. As He is with us in this water of baptism that claims us as His eternal children...
 - 3. and as He is with us in His Word; consoling, forgiving, and loving us through our days and years

Conclusion

1. In HIS HANDS – we are secure, we are at peace, we are protected, and we are saved!
2. Yes, now in 2009, "Our days and in Your Hands, O Lord!" Amen.