

2nd Sunday after Christmas 1/5/25
Ephesians 1:3-14 C

IN HIM WE HAVE REDEMPTION THROUGH HIS BLOOD, THE
FORGIVENESS OF OUR TRESPASSES, ACCORDING TO THE
RICHES OF HIS GRACE

Well, it's already the 5th day of the year of our Lord 2025, so I have to ask you: How is your New Year's Resolution going? You know what a New Year's resolution is, right? It's when people take a look at themselves and their lives and decide "enough is enough" and they decide to make changes, improve themselves and their lives. I happened upon a list of the most popular resolutions for 2025. The most popular was ... saving more money, followed by eating healthier, exercise more, lose weight, and spend more time with family and friends.

Yes, it's popular to make resolutions at the beginning of a new year – resolutions, which in spite of our best intentions, are often broken or forgotten. But today, I would like to talk about another resolution – God's resolution to save us when we fell into the death of sin; a resolution kept by God in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ. Yes, My Dear Friends, so that you and I would be redeemed, rescued, from eternal death and damnation, God sent His Son to us at His birth at Christmas. Paul says it this way this morning, *In Him [that is, in Christ] we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace (v. 7)*. It's the keeping of God's resolution that we meet in the temple this Sunday.

You know the story. As was their yearly custom, the Holy Family went to Jerusalem for the Passover when Jesus was now 12-years-old. When the feast was ended, His parents did not know that He stayed

behind. After 3 days, they found the Son of God, **where?** The House of God, the Temple.

“Did you not know that I must be in My Father’s house” (v. 49). With the first recorded words we have of Jesus, He reminds Mary and Joseph and us who He is and why He has come to dwell among us, because His Father kept His resolve to send a Savior.

The Father’s business was there in the temple. That is where God dwelt among His people, above the Ark of the Covenant, between the wings of the cherubim. Separating God from His people was a curtain, a reminder to the people that they had not loved the Lord their God with all their heart, with all their soul, and with all their strength and they had not loved their neighbor as themselves. And, that sin separated them from God. God’s business at His House was the forgiveness of sin, doing away with that which separated the Creator from His creations. It was here that sacrifices were made for sin. It was here that the Passover Lambs were brought to be slaughtered.

The Son resolved to do His Father’s business, so He humbled Himself to be born of a Virgin and nothing could keep Jesus from keeping His resolution. Not the friend who betrayed Him with a kiss; not those who arrested Him in Gethsemane’s garden; not those who beat and spat upon Him; not those who cried out for His death. As the lamb is silent before it’s shearers, so the innocent lamb of God, carrying our transgressions, silently bore His cross. Jesus was about His Father’s business keeping the Father’s resolution to redeem us by His death on that cross. When He died on that cross, that CURTAIN in the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom, because our sin is gone in the cleansing blood of Christ and so nothing separates us from God anymore.

Some 20 years after our Gospel account, Jesus would again go missing for three days. But then, He rose and showed to all the world that because He lives, all who believe in Him will live also. God's promise was made, and He kept His resolution.

I asked you a few minutes ago how your New Year's resolution was going. Isn't it interesting that with one tick of the clock we go from 2024 to 2025? Wouldn't it really be nice if all our worries, fears, and stresses would just end with the end of the year? You know, one tick of the clock, POOF – they're gone. But, we all know, one tick of the clock doesn't take away our troubles and trials.

So, I ask you, My Friends in Christ: What are you struggling with today? Are you afraid of facing the new year with continued illness and infirmity? Are you dreading the constant financial difficulties that seem to never go away? Are you heartbroken over a relationship that is hurting you? Are you wondering if God will open a door and show you the purpose and plan He has for your life?

But, Dear Friends, whatever your struggles this new year, rejoice and take heart because you are IN CHRIST.

One of my favorite movies is *Apollo 13*. It recounts the story of a failed lunar mission that almost killed the three astronauts aboard just after Neil Armstrong's historic walk on the moon. You may remember what happened. As the spacecraft made its way towards the moon, an oxygen tank exploded, damaging the main spacecraft. The three astronauts had to use everything at their disposal to return home safely. But, they weren't alone. Not only did the lunar module encase them with needed oxygen, water, and safety; but back on earth, there were teams of experts rallying to chart their course and troubleshoot every obstacle that presented itself to

bring them home.

The flight team back on earth had to devise a plan to use the moon's gravity to bring a broken ship back to earth. Astronauts and engineers on the ground developed procedures to power up the spacecraft with the very last ounce of energy that the ship had, so that the exhausted flyers could reenter the earth's atmosphere safely. And all of this was done under the pressure of time constraints. Those three astronauts were in real danger, but even more importantly, they were in **very good hands**.

Well, today, My Friends, so are you. You are baptized into Christ and you are His own child. As you make your way through life in this world, you are in good hands in Christ. As you face the challenges of life, no matter what they are, you are in good hands of Him who did not spare His own Son but gave Him for us all (cf. Ro 8:32).

God is always working on your behalf, and mine. He charted your way home through Jesus who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He strengthens you and equips you for every good work as hear and learn His Word and as you eat and drink the life-giving Body and Blood of Jesus. He gives you the gift of prayer so that you can cast all your cares upon Him, receiving His consolation and help. Your gracious God gives you everything you need for today and every day, for the year 2025, just as He did in all the years before. That's why we can say with Paul, *The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen (2 Tim 4:18).*

Listen to God's Word today. Listen and believe it for yourself: *"In him – in Christ --- we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he has lavished upon us."*

That's God's resolution for you, and cherish the fact that God keeps His resolutions.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.