

Happy New You!  
New Year's Eve 2010

### **Revelation 21:5**

**He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!"**

Happy New Year!

In approximately 5 hours, people all over the East Coast will be speaking those words to one another. Some of them will not be aware that they are being wished a happy new year, and may not remember it tomorrow.

Perhaps a million people will brave the cold to say that they ushered in 2011 in Times Square, New York.

Many more millions will celebrate in parties across the US and in many other countries.

As I've mentioned before in New Year's sermons, there is a certain arbitrary character about this holiday. It is, in fact, just a day chosen in the calendar on which to mark the passing of one year and the beginning of another. I suppose we could just as well do it on July 1<sup>st</sup> as January 1<sup>st</sup>, and a lot more comfortably, too.

In fact, the Church is already 1/12<sup>th</sup> finished with its New Year. We began the new year of the Church on the last Sunday of November with the beginning of Advent.

Nevertheless, arbitrary though it may be, celebrating the new year serves a purpose. And I suppose it may be said that we need excuses to celebrate more in the dead cold of winter than in the warmth and life of summer.

So, to all of you, Happy New Year!

But I will wish you something else, as well. It is something that only Christians can wish one another with any certainty that it will really happen.

We may wish one another a happy new year, but there is not guarantee that it 2011 will be a happy year for everyone. In fact, I can guarantee that when we gather for this service next year, there will be some of you sitting here who will say, "2011 was a great year for me." And others who will say, "Wow, I'm glad to close the book on 2011!" That's just the nature of things.

And people, perhaps you are one of them, will make resolutions tonight and tomorrow which they hope will make 2011 a good or a better year for them. I have one or two in mind myself. But there's no guarantee that you or I will keep them. Truth be told, I don't have a very good track record of keeping my New Year's resolutions.

But there is something that we can wish one another that we can be sure will come true, something of which only Christians can be sure.

I will wish it to you now: "Happy New You!"

Let me say it again, just for those who may have thought I was wishing you a "happy chocolate drink."

"Happy New You!"

I can wish that for you and we can wish that for one another in full confidence that it will come true. In fact, the only thing that would keep it from coming true is if we kept it from coming true.

You see, each of us becoming a new person is something God promises. It begins the day we are baptized and continues throughout our lives, every day of our lives. Paul speaks of it in 2 Corinthians 5:17:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

He speaks of the new life that the Holy Spirit creates in each of us through Baptism and faith in Jesus. It is the new life that Christ purchased for us with His death on the cross, and it is new to us every morning.

Paul writes of it again in Ephesians 4:22-24:

22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new

self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

The death of our Savior on the cross not only won for us the promise of eternal life with Him in heaven, but the promise that that eternal life begins the moment we come to faith. It transforms the life we live in this world in ways that only the Holy Spirit can accomplish.

We wake each day with the assurance that the sins of the past are forgiven and forgotten. We face each new day with a clean slate, unburdened by the mistakes of yesterday. Our sins are forgiven and forgotten, washed away through faith in our Savior.

But as great and as freeing as that assurance is, there is more to this Happy New You.

The Holy Spirit is our constant companion, tirelessly at work within us to transform us, to make us truly new people.

He works in our hearts and minds to change our very orientation to life, to change us from self-centered to other-directed, to change our focus from our selves to the cross.

This is no mere thing. This is enormous, for it means a change in our essential being. He is, in fact, undoing and reforming within us the effects of sin that changed us in the Garden of Eden from devoted followers of God to self-indulgent, sinful followers of our own way.

And the Spirit is working at this every day of our lives.

He meets with varied success on any given day. When we do not resist His work within us, the new person grows within us. When we stubbornly go our own way, or neglect our faith life, the Spirit has a harder time bringing out of us that new person.

This is the legacy of our Baptism, the gift of our lifelong Companion, the Holy Spirit.

And this is what makes the life of faith in Christ joyous.

All over the world, people will be wishing one another Happy New Year in the hope that 2011 will be a good one for them.

We may wish one another "Happy New You!" with confidence that it will happen because it is not our work and not our promise, but the God's work and God's promise.

Look forward in 2011 with great anticipation for the New You that the Holy Spirit will bring forth. Make His work easy by regular prayer, regular Bible study, regular reception of the Lord's Supper, and regular worship.

And, know that if you don't get in His way, this time next year, you will be a different person, one more like Jesus.

Happy New You!

**Ephesians 4:22-24 (New International Version, ©2010)**

<sup>22</sup> You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; <sup>23</sup> to be made new in the attitude of your minds; <sup>24</sup> and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

**Romans 6:4**

We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life