



from the desk of ...  
**Rande Wayne Smith**  
D.Min., Th.M., M.Div.

**#785**  
**31 December 2017**

**New Year's Eve**

## **HAPPY RENEW YEAR**

**The Revelation 21:5**

Guess what? ... We've almost done it. We've almost made it through another year. This is our final time together in 2017. (X) 2018 is almost upon us ... a brand-new year:

- a year of possibilities
- a year of opportunities
- 12 months ... 52 weeks ... 365 days
- 8,760 hours ... 525,600 minutes ... 31,536,000 seconds

What in the world are you going to do with all that time?

In 365 days, when 2018 is over:

- will we be looking back at it with joy?
- will we be looking back at it with regret?
- will we have done anything different?
- will we have accomplished anything?
- will we be looking ahead with anticipation?
- will we be looking ahead with dread?
- will we have gotten closer to the Lord?

As you're pondering those questions I'd like to read a passage from The Revelation. The Apostle John has received an amazing vision from the Lord. He was told to

"write, then, the things you see, both the things that are now & the things that will happen afterward."

(The Revelation 1:19)

At which point John witnesses 5,280 incredible revelations. And when we get toward the end of the book John writes ...

"Then the one who sits on the throne said, 'And now I make all things new!' He also said to me, 'Write this, because these words are true and can be trusted.'"

(The Revelation 21:5)

**May the Lord grant that we may engage in contemplating the mysteries of His Heavenly wisdom with really increasing devotion, to His glory and to our edification. Amen**

The 2 sentences we just read proclaim an important part of God's working in time & history, in the here & now, in the past & the future, as well as in creation, & in human hearts.

The Apostle John, in this incredible revelation from the Lord, saw God seated on His throne, & instructing him to write what he sees & hears. And God was saying, I believe, something important for us as we begin 2018.

God told John ... "And now I make all things new!"  
Or, as some other translations put it ...

"Look! I am making everything new!"

Or, "I am re-creating all things."

This year, & every year, can & should be a time of renewal in our lives ... in our life together as a fellowship, as well as in our lives as individual believers.

That's why I titled this morning's message ... "Happy ReNew Year". 1<sup>st</sup>, I want us to look at this idea that God is in the business of renewing, of "making all things new" ... & what that means to us personally.

Then I want to suggest 3 specific ways in which the Lord would make us new in 2018:

- in attitude
- in devotion
- in service

Now, John has been recording these incredible visions that God has given him. And at this point he has just seen "a new heaven & a new earth" (The Revelation 21:1) ... this is where those of us who have come to faith in Jesus Christ will live with Him forever & ever.

In this part of John's vision, given to him by The Holy Spirit, he's seeing the end of time & the beginning of eternity. (In a previous vision John had witnessed the 1<sup>st</sup> earth & heaven ceasing to exist.) (The Revelation 20:11)

But this "new heaven & new earth" is a place where God Himself will be with us. (The Revelation 21:3) It's going to be a place where we won't have to do the things we did this past year, such as mourn over the loss of 5 loved ones from our Church family: Jim Ferguson, Audrey Koester, Ruth Siers, Ken Schroeder, & Freda Schulz.

"God will wipe away all tears from our eyes. There will be no more death, no more grief or crying or pain. The old things have disappeared." (The Revelation 21:4)

That sounds good to me! Come Lord Jesus!

Anyway, that's the context in which John hears God say ... "& now I make all things new!" ... "I am making everything new!" ... "I am re-creating all things."

And even though he's describing a specific moment & place in the future, the end of time as we know it ... I believe it's also a picture of God working throughout recorded history, throughout Scripture.

It's saying something about our great God that's not just true in the future, not just true in the context of the end of the age, in the sweet by-in-by ... but it's also true today, in the here & now. Our God is a God of new things. He's a God of restoration. He's a God of refreshment. He's a God of spiritual renewal. "Even though our physical being is gradually decaying, yet our spiritual being is renewed day after day." (2 Corinthians 4:16)

Our Scripture passage today is a picture of what awaits us at the end of time. But, even now, we get a kind of glimpse of what that may be like. It's what Fanny Crosby was referring to in her sacred song, "Blessed Assurance" ... "o what a foretaste of glory divine!"

In Heaven we'll have a new body, an incredible body. We'll be living in a brand-new place, that has been made specifically for us by Jesus Himself! (John 14:2)

But, you understand, God's work of making all things new isn't limited to what's happening now in Heaven, or what took place back there at the beginning. This re-creating activity of His is something that's been ongoing, throughout history.

And not only does God desire newness, but I believe that He's built into our makeup a craving for it.

You know, I find myself praying for that frequently ... new strength, new determination, new attitudes.

Even my favorite verse in Scripture suggests this ...

"Those who trust in the LORD for help  
will find their strength renewed.  
They will rise on wings like eagles;  
they will run & not get weary;  
they will walk & not grow weak." (Isaiah 40:31)

This concept of newness is a central theme in the N.T.

We read about:

- new life (Romans 6:4)
- new teaching (Mark 1:27)
- new wine, new wineskins (Luke 5:38)
- new commandment (John 13:34)
- new covenant (1 Corinthians 11:25)
- new being (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- new people (Ephesians 2:15)
- new self (Colossians 3:10)
- new heaven & new earth (The Revelation 21:1)
- new name (The Revelation 2:17)
- new Jerusalem (The Revelation 21:2)
- "all things new" (The Revelation 21:5)

There's a newness that's also seen in His creation. There's the daily newness of night turning into day, darkness to light. There's the annual turning of winter into spring, spring to summer, summer to autumn, autumn to winter ... endlessly repeating throughout time.

(Daniel 2:21)

There's a newness & renewal in life. God is in the business of creating (Genesis 1:1) ... & He continues to create & recreate. There's no reason to think that God's creative juices ended on the 6<sup>th</sup> day. Being a Creator is part of who He is ...

& we're the constant recipients of His work.

That's the theme of Thomas Chisholm's hymn, "Great Is Thy Faithfulness." Let's sing the 3<sup>rd</sup> verse ...

Pardon for sin & a peace that endureth,  
 Thy own dear presence to cheer & to guide.  
 Strength for today & bright hope for tomorrow  
 Blessings all mine with 10,000 beside.

Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!  
 Morning by morning new mercies I see;  
 All I have needed Thy hand hath provided.  
 Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.

"Morning by morning new mercies I see."

Consciously, or subconsciously, I think that's a reflection, of what some of the celebration that takes place tonight at midnight is all about. We have this innate sense that new things are important ... a new year, a new beginning.

So, God's words ... "& now I make all things new!" ... define an essential part of His work among us today, 31 December 2017. I've suggested some examples already: new life, new covenant, new birth, new commandment.

But let me cite just a few of the dozens of Scriptures we could look at this morning, to help illustrate this idea. For example,

here's God speaking through the Prophet Isaiah ...

"Do not cling to events of the past  
 or dwell on what happened long ago.

Watch for the new thing I am going to do.

It is happening already - you can see it now!" (Isaiah 43:18-19)

Sadly, there are a # of people who cling to the past ... "the good ol' days." "Things were a lot better back then." And some of that thinking even makes its' way into the Church. I had several people tell me how, back in the day, we used to fill the sanctuary twice on Christmas Eve. And praise God for that!

But because we didn't do it this year doesn't mean that God has abandoned C.C.R.M. We're still in His plan & purpose. And as Isaiah reminds us ... we're to "watch for the new thing He's going to do" with us in 2018.

Or how about this promise? The Lord says ... "I will give you a new heart & a new mind. I will take away your stubborn heart of stone & give you an obedient heart."

(Ezekiel 36:26) You know, I especially like that one.

Ed Dufford had open-heart surgery on Friday. That was necessary because of some heart disease that he had.

But Ed isn't the only one with heart disease. Each one of us suffers from a sinful heart/a stubborn heart. And unlike the cardiac surgeons who operated on Ed ... God Himself handles the procedure on us. And He has given us a new heart/an obedient heart ...

along with a new mind.

And that means my motivations & desires are now directed away from sin & toward God.

Boy, I like knowing that as I begin 2018.

"Anyone who is joined to Christ is a new being; the old is gone, the new has come." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

What old stuff has gone? ... desires, thoughts, self.

What new stuff has come? ...

New desires. New thoughts. A new self.

But the key phrase is ... "Joined to Christ" ... because it's critical to remember who does this for us. Jesus does it. We're "joined" to Him, & because of that ... we've become "a new being."

"Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind.

Then you will be able to know the will of God - what is good & is pleasing to him & is perfect." (Romans 12:2)

This renewal, this newness, this transformation, doesn't just include our hearts, but it includes our minds. That's because when God does His work, when He "makes all things new", it comprises every aspect of us ... including our thinking.

"So get rid of your old self, which made you live as you used to - the old self that was being destroyed by its deceitful desires. Your hearts & minds must be made completely new, & you must put on the new self, which is created in God's likeness & reveals itself in the true life that is upright & holy." (Ephesians 4:22-24)

Here, once more, we see God doing a work of newness. And that leads me to the 1<sup>st</sup> thing I believe God would say about the new things He wants to do in us in 2018. I'm talking here about our mental disposition, that is, what we're inclined to think, to believe, to act on.

Our attitudes towards the things of life & faith are a critical component in how we respond to all of life. Jesus is our example ...

"Don't do anything from selfish ambition or from a cheap desire to boast, but be humble toward one another, always considering others better than yourselves.

And look out for one another's interests, not just for your own. The attitude you should have is the one that Christ Jesus had: He always had the nature of God, but he did not think that by force he should try to remain equal with God.

Instead of this, of his own free will he gave up all he had, & took the nature of a servant.

He became like a human being & appeared in human likeness.

He was humble & walked the path of obedience all the way to death - his death on the cross."

(Philippians 2:3-8)

Selfish ambition is a sinful mindset. Vain conceit is a sinful mindset. Boasting/bragging is a sinful mindset. Humility is the opposite of those ... it's a Godly attitude.

Looking out for the interests of others & obedience is the result. I believe that one of the "all things" God wants to renew in us this coming year involves our attitude.

"Do everything without complaining or arguing."

(Philippians 2:14)

What's your attitude about serving the Lord here at C.C.R.M.? ... This is a personal question directed at each one of us, me included. There's a lot of work that needs to be done here in 2018. God has called us, not just to come here to sit ... but to serve.

So when the opportunity presents itself ... what do we do with it? ... And how do we serve? ... Is it willingly? ... Or grudgingly? ... (1 Peter 5:2) Do we complain about what we have to do? Or are we thankful for the opportunity?

Paul likens the Church to the human body ... & how each part is needed & has a purpose. (1 Corinthians 12:27) What if my hand were to say ... "I'm going to take a year off"? What if my eyes were to say ... "Hey, I've done my duty, use another part of the body, it's their turn"?

How effective would our bodies be?

I came across a poem recently ...

When God assigns a task, one that He needs done,  
Don't question why he chose you, to be the special one,  
Ours is not to reason why, or fret about His plan,  
Or hesitate to air our doubts, or ponder if we can,

He knows your limitations, He knows your talents too,  
 The chores He has are many, the willing workers few,  
 He needs your hands & feet, to demonstrate His caring,  
     He needs your voice to witness,  
     to the kingdom He's preparing,  
 So, answer when God calls you, supply a ready ear,  
 He won't ask the impossible, put aside your fear,  
 The only thing you really need, to honor God's request,  
     Is the will to serve Him fully,  
     & a pledge to do your very best.

Once again, I believe that when we're talking about  
 God making "all things new" for me, for you, for C.C.R.M.  
 in 2018, it's going to include:

- our attitude
- our devotion
- our service

And each of those will involve faith, because ...

"No one can please God without faith." (Hebrews 11:6)

Why? ... Because "whoever comes to God must have faith  
 that God exists & rewards those who seek him."

That's another of those great promises found in  
 Scripture ... God will "reward" us. But there's also a  
 personal responsibility involved. We are to "seek" Him.

And we are to "please" Him.

Those are 2 more things I want "renewed" in my life.

But it all begins with believing that God exists.

You know, that's never really been an issue for me. For as long as I can remember, I've always believed that God exists. ... But there are times in my life when I act like He doesn't. When I try to handle difficult situations with my own strength, abilities, or ingenuity.

Those are times when I need to start trusting God more.

I find myself identifying with the father of the evil spirit-possessed boy when Jesus told him ...

"Everything is possible for the person who has faith."

(Well, I believe ... I have faith. But there's a part of me that struggles every now & again, & my faith weakens, & I need to pray the prayer of that boy's father) ...

"I do have faith, but not enough. Help me have more!"

(Mark 9:23-24)

This year, more than ever, I want to approach all the things in my life with an attitude of faith.

That leads me to the next thing I believe God wants to make new for all of us in 2018. Faith comes through the spiritual disciplines of life ... & our devotion to the Lord is a key component in building the kind of faith attitudes that God wants us to have.

How much of your heart does God have? ...

How much is He included in your day-to-day activities? ...

We're entering our 18<sup>th</sup> year together?

And for those of you who were part of the congregation way back then, you've heard me say 5,280 times ... "if you're not in the Word of God daily, faith isn't the only thing missing from your Christian life."

What's more, you may be in a precarious place.

Devotions, or quiet time, or daily time in the Word & in prayer, or whatever we want to call it, may not be all there is to the Christian life ...

but it's an extremely critical component.

Let me say this as clearly as I can ... if you're not spending time with the Lord daily,  
you're in a dangerous place.

How much time do you spend each day with the Lord? ... Is time with Jesus a key element of your day? ...  
Is it a priority? ...

2017 was incredibly busy for me ... & I know it was for each of you. We're all going in 5,280 directions. Demands are coming from every side. But we can't let those things crowd God out. Our attitude should be such that time with the Lord is the priority in our lives.

So, let me say it one more time ... read your Bible every day. Pray. And if you haven't picked up your "Month Of Prayer" pamphlet ... don't leave here this morning without it.

We all need to be praying about C.C.R.M. & its' ministry.

And then we're to "Strive for righteousness, faith, love, & peace." (2 Timothy 2:22) The word "strive" here implies effort, this is going to take some work on our part. But, I want to be righteous, I want to have faith ... & love ... & experience God's peace. Don't you? ...

"Faith comes from hearing the message, & the message comes through preaching Christ." (Romans 10:17)

God wants us to be made new in our devotion to Him in 2018. He wants that, at least in part, for the sake of His love relationship with us.

One of the key things we must note about our Scripture passage today, is that God says these words ...  
"I make."

These are God's words, His declaration. God makes. God makes all things new. You don't make. I don't make. God makes. It's on Him that "our faith depends from beginning to end." (Hebrews 12:2) He's the one who makes all things new. All we must do is cooperate,  
& then, do those He wants us to do.

"God has created us for a life of good deeds, which he has already prepared for us to do." (Ephesians 2:10)

The idea is clear. We are made new ... we are created in Christ Jesus. We're His workmanship. We're made for a reason, for a purpose.

And He's already set in place the things we're to do.

Okay, quick review. God is a God of making "all things new" ... & He wants to re-create a newness in our attitudes as we live out our lives for Him.

God wants to re-create a newness in our devotion ... that we'd be wholehearted in our approach to our relationship with Him.

And God wants to re-create a newness in service ... that we'd be faithful to seek the deeds that He's already put in place for us to do in 2018.

I love the story about the son who called his parents to wish them a Happy New Year. When his Dad answered the phone the boy asked, "Well Dad, what's your New Year's resolution?" He answered proudly, "To make your mother as happy as I can all year". Then his Mom got on the phone & he asked her the same question, "What's your resolution, Mom?" She replied, "To see that your Dad keeps his New Year's resolution."

I'd like to challenge you in joining me with a similar New Year's resolution for 2018 ... that is, "to make my Lord & Savior as happy as I can all year."

(X) That every day, you & I will do something that will lead us closer to God.

Let's spend a moment in silent prayer.

**MARANA THA**