

Sunday 01/26/25 – Panama Methodist Church

Sermon Title: A New Year in Christ: Part 4 of 4 – “New Beginnings - Celebrating” (2 Corinthians 5:17, Psalm 150, Philippians 4:4-7)

(Slides 1-11 will be listed in order throughout this sermon 😊!)

For the last three weeks, we have been walking together through this New Year of 2025. We have also learned that of all of the months of the year, January is the least popular month in our country. In addition to this, some studies report that February is the second least popular month in our country. Starting a New Year well is a good thing, as we all have a “New Year in Christ” in 2025. This morning, we will end this sermon series, as this morning is part 4 of 4.

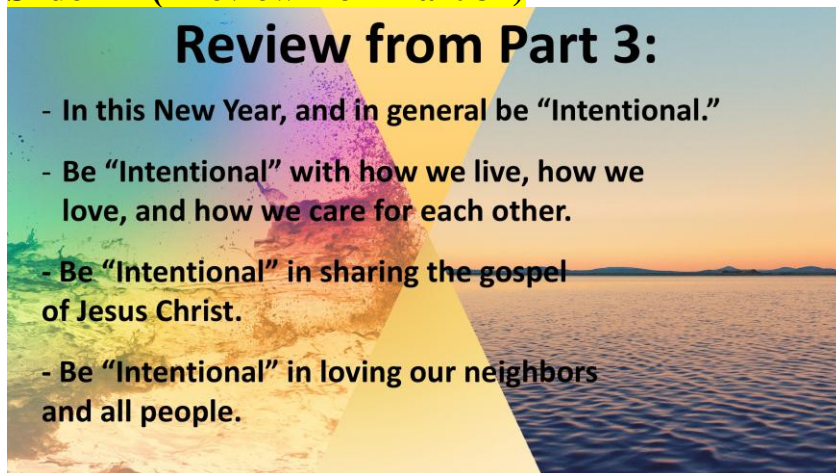
Slide 1 – (“A New Year in Christ: Series – Part 4 of 4)



So far in this sermon series we have talked about how a New Year and how “New Year’s Resolutions” are good but are different from forgiveness in Christ. We can become better every New Year, and every day, but we can only be

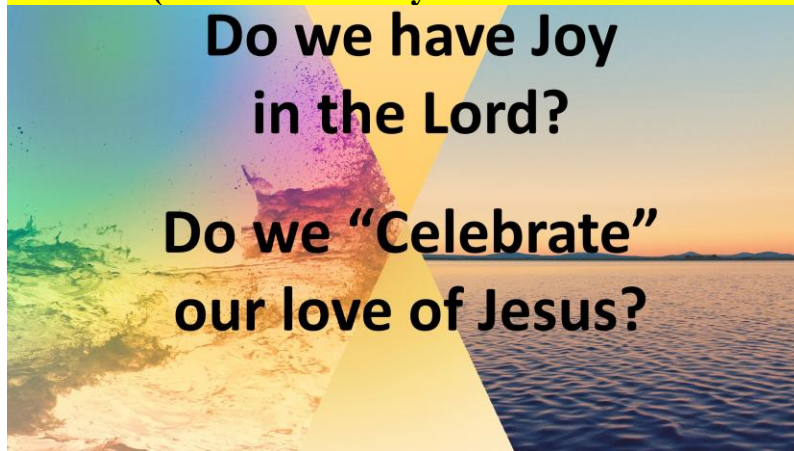
forgiven of our sins through Jesus Christ our Lord. Since January is the least popular month in our country, sometimes in the New Year, and in general, it is good to “focus” or “refocus” on Jesus. To this end, last week we talked about being “intentional” with our faith, our lives, how we live, and how we love. In January 2025 or anytime we can turn to Jesus, “focus” or “refocus” on Him, and be “Intentional” with our faith, how we love, and how we live. In briefly reviewing what we talked about last week about being “intentional,” here are a couple main review points:

Slide 2 – (“Review from Part 3”)



Even though this was from last week, let us all keep being “intentional.” This morning though, on this last week of this sermon series, I want to talk about “celebrating,” and joy and praise. “Celebrating” our faith and “celebrating” what Jesus has done for us all is good and is important! With this said, I have a couple of questions for us to consider on this day about “celebrating” in this “New Year in Christ.” Here are the questions:

Slide 3 – (“Do we have Joy in the Lord? Do we “Celebrate”?”)



In the last day or the last week, did we have any joy in our lives about Jesus. In the last day or the last week, did you celebrate your faith, God’s love, or the unshakable hope that we have only in Jesus Christ? In a new year, and in general, let us all strive to have more Joy in the Lord, and “celebrate” our faith and love for Christ and each other. This is one of the big reasons that the foundational verse for this sermon series is 2 Corinthians 5:17, that says, once again:

Slide 4 – (“2 Corinthians 5:17”)



If Jesus died for us, saved us, restored us, and if we are a new creation in Him, do we have joy, and do we “celebrate” our faith?

This morning, I have two scriptures that I want to discuss on this topic, while there are many more in the Bible. If you have your Bibles or your Bible App on your phones or smart devices, turn with me to Psalm 150. So, Psalm 150, which is six verses of scripture. This is a great Psalm that is subtitled, “Praise for God’s Surpassing Greatness.” Let us read Psalm 150 together, as it says:

Slide 5 – (“Psalm 150:1-3”)

Psalm 150
Praise for God's Surpassing Greatness

¹ Praise the LORD! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty firmament! ² Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his surpassing greatness! ³ Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp!

Slide 6 – (“Psalm 150:4-6”)

Psalm 150

⁴ Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe! ⁵ Praise him with clanging cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals! ⁶ Let everything that breathes praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!

When we pray, when we worship in church and elsewhere, do we have joy? Do we have “celebration” and excitement about our faith? When looking at Psalm 150, we hear of a very musical and celebratory worship. We hear of hearts after God,

loving Jesus, and praising Him. We here about people who are grateful to be in God's presence and are being filled with the Holy Spirit. Further, there are instruments! In Psalm 150:3 we are told to praise God with the sound of trumpet, a lute, and harp. Why, because when we come here to worship, and in various times and places in our lives, we are reaching out to connect to the creator of the universe. We are asking God to fill us, and we are telling God we love Him. We are thanking Him for His son Jesus, and we are calling upon the Holy Spirit of God. This is very different than going to church, just to go to church. Some of us at various times in our lives maybe went through the motions of church worship, and in general. What would it be like though to truly have joy, praise, to "celebrate" God?

Psalm 150 continues telling us in 150:4-5 to "Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe! Praise him with clanging cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals!" I know that worship for many, including myself does need to be serious and reverent, but we can also have joy and excitement in "celebrating" our faith, at the same time. Using instruments and things that make noise in worship then, is not a new thing. In fact, it happened centuries before Christ came to this earth, as God in the flesh. I have worshipped in a couple of churches before that have really lived Psalm 150 out, and it was quite exciting, joyous, and celebratory worship service! We are talking worship where

you are on your feet, and you are praising God. Worship that fills you with the Holy Spirit!

When we worship, when we come to God, if we have really prayed, and if we have really worshiped here or elsewhere, we should know it. We are “celebrating” God, and we are changed by being in God’s presence. Experiencing the joy of God, the love of Jesus Christ, and “celebrating” our faith, or just “celebrating” in general, is good for lives, is good for our souls, is good for our families, is good for our churches, is good for our communities, is good for our world, and is good is leading people to salvation in Jesus Christ our Lord. A picture that conveys this idea well says this, “praising God in advance restored your faith and brings peace.”

Slide 7 – (“Praising God in Advance” Picture)



A great blessing for me as a pastor, and as a Christian, is seeing people connected to God in worship. They could have a raised hand, or both, because raising two hands is a sign of surrender. In these moments of worship, I see people in the

presence of God, filled with the Holy Spirit, filled with joy and peace, and people who are “celebrating” Jesus. “Celebrating” my brothers and sisters is a wonderful thing to do in our faith. Sometimes we can also “celebrate” our families, the blessings God has given us in our lives, etc. So, do we “celebrate” God? I have a picture for us this morning that asks this very question:

Slide 8 – (“How well do we celebrate God” Picture)



How do we “celebrate” God? What do we do when we get that good news we have been waiting to hear for a long time? What do we do when we get the report back that we are healed? What do we do when we get that report that we are sick? What do we do when know that God is with us, even through the hardest of times? Do we raise hands to “celebrate” God? Do we ever just thank Jesus for who He is, and for what He has done for us?

While Psalm 150 is a great Psalm on worship and “celebrating” God, Philippians 4:4-7 is also another good scripture about “celebrating” God. If you want to turn in your Bibles or Bible Apps from Psalm 150 in the Old Testament or

Hebrew Bible, to the Apostle Paul's letter to the church in Philippi, or the Philippians in the New Testament, we can read this scripture together. So, once again, let us turn to Philippians 4:4-7, as we will hear more about rejoicing and “celebrating” God. This is what it says:

Slide 9 – (“Philippians 4:4-7”)



Again, we have this theme of rejoicing or “celebrating.” This reminds me of first our Annual Conference gathering last April 2024 for the Northeast Conference of the Global Methodist Church. The praise, the rejoicing, and the “celebrating” was amazing! People were praying with their heads on the floor, and their hands extended in front of them. People had tears running down their face, as we heard nothing but Biblical and Christ centered teaching. There we instruments, singing, and more “celebrating” than I had seen in a while. I think if we are honest sometimes, we come to church though we can be exhausted, wide awake, or many things in between. Sometimes we come burdened, or unburdened. Celebrating in this New Year, and in general, is about having those moments where we are

connected to God, and also to each other. Those moments where we feel the Holy Spirit in powerful ways! Have we had any of these moments in this new year? If not, do we want to have moments of “celebrating?” Do we want to feel God’s presence more? Do we want more joy, praise, and rejoicing in Jesus in our lives? I know that I want that every day. We can pray, we can read our Bibles, love others, and live out our faith in Christ.

In Philippians 4:4 we read once again, “Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, Rejoice.” I have talked to people before who have told me that they have felt little to no joy, praise, or “celebrating” in their worship services sometimes. Some of these folks have told me that their worship services seemed like something they just did every week, but there was no excitement or enthusiasm for Jesus. They told me that their worship was very scripted and did not have a lot of heart or spirit in it. For me, I want to continue to lead a “celebrating” church. A Church that gathers for worship, gathers in other places, or individually, with joy, rejoicing, and celebration for Jesus. For is God!

The Apostle Paul continues in Philippians 4:5 and tells us once again, “Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.” Not only are we calling upon God in worship and in general, but the faith that we have, and that we share can and often is contagious. Now I did not use the word contagious during the pandemic for obvious reasons but may be our faith and our “celebrating” be

contagious. I hope that people who visit and come to this church, see in us people that are deeply in love with and are worship God. When we do this, our worship, our joy, our rejoicing, and our “celebrating,” is something that those around us see and will begin to embrace themselves. In being gentle and kind, people will see the love of Christ in us, and God can and will use that to change others for Christ. The next verse is one that can be a challenge for many of us. In Philippians 4:6 the Apostle Paul tells us once again, “Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made know to God.” I think for many of us we are actively working on not having any worry and or concerns in our lives, and hopefully we ask God to continue to help us with that. When are worried or burdened though, it can impact and get in the way of our worship, our joy, our hope, and are ability to “celebrate” God. In the final verse in this reading, the Apostle Paul tells us in Philippians 4:7, “And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” In “celebrating,” whether it is in worship like we are worship right here, or anywhere, may we have the peace of God. For when we do, we are much more open to the fullness of “celebrating” of God. I do not know about you, but I like to leave worship and prayer changed. I like to leave worship and prayer feeling joy, rejoicing, peace, hope, mercy, and having an attitude to “celebrate” Jesus.

So far in this worship service this morning, have we had any joy? Have we had any peace? So far in the worship service this morning, have we “celebrated” all that God is? If we have not, what is separating us from “celebrating” Jesus and our love for each other? We are reminded in our scripture reading from Philippians 4:4-7 for this morning, as a picture I have says, “Rejoice in the Lord.” In looking at this picture, you might be thinking, “where in Panama was this picture taken” with all the snow that we have had! Even in a cold and snowy month, we can celebrate, and we can love each other. You see God is closer to us than our very breath, and lately it has been so cold that we have been able to see our very breath! As Christians and as a church, we are a community, a family, and we are called to love each other, have joy, peace, hope, and we are called to “celebrate”

Slide 10 – (“Rejoice in the Lord” Picture)



So how then does this all apply to our lives today? Let us look together at our application for our lives slide, as I invite our praise team forward:

Slide 11 – (“Application to Our Lives:”)



Application to our Lives:

- In this New Year, and in general are we seeking joy in Christ?
- Are we finding times to “celebrate” God’s love and hope with others?
- How can we find the love and joy of Christ today?
- How can we better “celebrate” the hope and love of Jesus Christ today?

In this New Year, and every day let us seek the joy of Christ in our lives and let us share that with joy others. May we also find times to “celebrate” God’s love and hope with others. Further, let us find time to “celebrate” in general! Lastly, how can we find the love and joy Christ even more today? How can we better “celebrate” the hope and love of Christ today? In this new year, and always my brothers and sisters may we be “celebrating” people of faith. Amen.