

Good morning and Happy New Year! I hope your holidays were wonderful. The first Sunday of the month is always bittersweet for me. I love the holidays and am always sad to see them go. The Presslers ended them last evening by bundling up, sitting around the fire pit, roasting hot dogs and marshmallows, and playing Christmas music for the last time. It was a wonderful time mixed with a bit of grief that the season is over.

But with the new year comes new beginnings and new opportunities. But how should we choose to start it? Many will make new year's resolutions, focusing on health, relationships, habits, work. Others are rolling into the new year with a sense of dread because it's starting much like 2021 started. But what about for the believer? We may not know **what** 2022 will be about, but we can know **who** 2022 will be about and devote ourselves to him.

And that is what we are doing this morning. We're beginning the year with what we are calling Consecration Sunday. Consecration is a big biblical word that means to set apart as sacred or holy for a special purpose. Many of you experienced consecration over the last few weeks when you ate off dishes that get pulled out once or twice a year. We ate dessert off plates originally owned by Martha's grandmother. They only get used for special purposes. That's consecration.

We see an explicit example of this in Joshua 3:5: ⁵ **Then Joshua said to the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you."** The Jews were about to cross the Jordan for the special purpose of conquering the Promised Land, and Joshua is calling them to prepare themselves for that. We see that consecration has two parts: dedication and expectation. **Dedication** is a commitment to set yourself apart for the purposes of God and, as we do, we live with the **expectation** that God will do something in you and through you as you devote yourself to him.

The beginning of the year is like the crossing of the Jordan. It's a new beginning God is calling us into. So this morning we will dedicate ourselves to God corporately and individually as we expect God to do wonders among us in 2022. It all begins, though, with praise. We start by proclaiming who God is because consecration is a response to Him. **He is worthy, and he is worth it.** Martha is going to come up and pray a prayer of praise, and then we will give you some time to write out your own prayer of praise.

What impact do you think Fellowship could have in 2022? What impact do you think we should have in 2022? 2,000 years ago, Jesus gave us our mission in two parts: The Great Commandment to love God and love others, and the Great Commission to go and make disciples of all nations. **We do that by calling each other to live out our God-given purpose in Christ every day.**

These commands are given to us collectively. We live in the tension of being individuals but also being part of something greater than ourselves. We are the Church, the body of Christ, the family of God, the temple of the Holy Spirit. There are things we can do and we can show only when we are together and this morning we have an opportunity to pray and dream about what could be in the new year. As we do, consider this:

Will we commit to gather weekly for the sole purpose of worshipping our God together? How will hearts and minds be changed if we preach the truth of Christ to a post-truth world? How will our city be different if we love and serve it well in the name of Christ? How will our lives be better if we live out the one another with one another? What can our unity show about Jesus to a divided world? How will the lives of the newcomer to Texas, the marginalized, the lonely, those searching be changed when we tell them “You are welcome here and you are invited to belong.”? What happens when more and more people are awakened to the call of God in their lives? What happens when our first priority becomes making much of God?

We can do this, but it will take all of us. I want to invite up our staff and elders, all of us who are part of this family, who call this church home. We are in this together and, by God’s grace, we will live out together what he has called us to. Mike Webster, our elder chair, will pray for our church, and then we’ll give you a few minutes to pray and dream about the impact we can make together.

Now that we’ve talked about the church, let’s talk about you individually. What impact could you make in 2022? What impact do you want to make? Do you know God’s purpose for your life?

We often talk about us operating where we live, work, and play. We do that by wearing many hats, living out many roles. I am a child of God, husband, father, son, brother, uncle, pastor, neighbor, friend. Who are you and how is God wanting you to live into each of those roles? Are you willing to dedicate each of those to the Lord in the new year? Is there anything you want to hold back from him? Notice how each of those roles are relational...unless one of your roles is hermit. God has you in that role for a reason, and that reason is the people you interact with in that role. You are there to shine the light of Christ into their lives.

I believe God has a wonderful adventure for you this year. Will you commit all of who you are to him? What he has for you is better than anything you can plan for yourself. I’m going to pray for you individually and then give you an opportunity to write down the different roles you play in your life and commit them to the Lord.

Communion: Our greatest example of consecration is of our Lord Jesus Christ. He dedicated himself to the work of our salvation and did so expecting the Father to move faithfully. So we close remembering, celebrating, and being inspired by the work he was consecrated to. Let us follow his example of giving all of ourselves to our God and his purposes.