

Health, growth, completion

Vision



New Apostolic Church USA

District News

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Winter 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Once more, a new year lays before us. Only God knows the content of the hours and days that we will encounter. Naturally, we want to have a bright and positive outlook considering what is to come. We wish for health, success, and good things to happen; there is nothing wrong about such wishes, and we know, with God, all things are possible. In this regard, we are mindful of what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:19 - *If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable*. Perhaps this verse becomes a little clearer in a different translation: *If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied* (NIV). It is a strong, yet truthful statement that if we only rely on Christ for things of this life, we have missed what His divine, and eternal, intention is for us.

On the other hand, it is also in our human nature to look towards the future negatively, with fear of the unknown, dread for an approaching concern, or anxiety over present shortcomings.

Let us consider a different perspective through the eyes of our faith. We approach each day with confidence and courage in the belief and knowledge that the almighty God, our Father, is with us! With such an understanding, we recognize the fact that whatever the day brings is of little consequence to us. When we live in the Spirit and abide in the environment of God's will, we live a life of freedom procured for us by Jesus, and our future is secure.

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Here, the Magnificat of Mary, gives us the right attitude:

My soul magnifies the Lord,

And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant;

For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.

For He who is mighty has done great things for me,

And holy is His name. (Luke 1: 46-49)

Mary composed this prayer in a time of uncertainty, not knowing the full extent of God's plan. Yet, strengthened by her cousin, she remained resilient and exclaimed such a hymn of confidence.

It is wise for us to be aware that the time prior to the coming of Christ will, at times, be fraught with difficulty and tribulation, causing one to even question the Lord's presence in their life, the church, or even His power in the world. At such times of disappointment and misunderstanding, the evil one will attack with doubt, and try to create distance, damaging our relationship with the Lord.

As in the time prior to Christ's birth, this also occurred during His Passion with the disciples. We can imagine the dismay and confusion when Jesus told them of His impending captivity, torture, and death. How was this possible? It seemed everything was on a positive track. However, the intentions of God did not coincide with the ideas of the disciples, especially Peter, whom Jesus warned in Luke 22:31-32.

We live in a similar circumstance today. At one time, we thought the church would continue to grow and triumph in the circle of Christianity, and then the Lord would come. We may have thought that large numbers are a measure of success. But it becomes more and more apparent that the Lord's measurements for success are vastly different than ours. We can see this in the small number of disciples that He left when He ascended, and yet, from these, Christianity spread and has endured over 2000 years!

Dear ones, let us not be dismayed because we do not understand the ways of our eternal Father. He does not expect us to understand. He simply has called us for His mission; to do what Jesus Christ commissioned His apostles to do...



Preach the gospel.

Make disciples of all people.

Prepare for His return.

This is our task and we will continue in it.

Yes, we do not know what the future days will bring, but this we do know: over the past years, under the activity of the Holy Spirit, the Lord has always allowed us the opportunity to grow and become closer in our relationship with Him. One knows it and can feel it! Let us not become tired in advancing the mission He has given us, even if we cannot understand or comprehend His entire plan. The Lord is with us, come what may.

We join with the psalmist - *Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You...in God I have put my trust; I will not fear* (Psalm 56:3-4).

Thus, we rest in our hope in the Lord. This is not wishful thinking, but a true hope in the biblical sense - the confident expectation in the fulfillment of the Lord's promise:

I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. - John 14:3

However, even as we look towards this future, Jesus wants to fulfill this word already today! Believing souls, *here and now*, can perceive His presence in the prefiguration of His kingdom as we share in the fellowship of Holy Communion. Our desire to live in this promise, *that where I am, there you may be also*, is articulated in our plea – *Your kingdom come!*

So, while we wait to be with the Lord, in the most complete and perfect way when He comes, we can already tangibly experience that He is with us already today. May this give us strength, courage, and confidence as we look into the year ahead.

With loving greetings,