



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

December 31, 2024

Pastor James Enderle

New Year's Eve

Reading: [Luke 13:6-9](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 90 (Red Hymnal)

Reading: [Ecclesiastes 12:1-2,5-7](#)

Sermon Text: [1 Peter 1:22-25](#)

THE GIFT OF GOD

The Word of the Lord Endures Forever

A RESOLUTION THAT LASTS

1. A Resolution in the _____ of the _____
2. A Resolution of _____ (_____ _____)
3. A Resolution with _____
4. A Resolution _____ by _____

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from Jesus Christ, our Lord:

We're in the season of the New Year and the time to make New Year's Resolutions. I don't know what type of person you are, if you make New Year's Resolutions or if you've given that up a long time ago. Maybe you did or you still do. Do you tell those resolutions to other people? How many times when you've made New Year's Resolutions did you go and share them with a bunch of people? Not very often I'd assume. Usually we write them down and then maybe hide them and then sometimes pretend like we never made them. It's hard to keep them.

One resolution that I'm going to make and I'm going to tell you, because I want to keep it, is that I plan to lose some weight this year. I look back and I did this program 75 Hard a few years ago, like four years ago, and there are pictures of me for the first day of school back in 2020 and I look like a different person. So I'm starting to look and wonder, maybe it's time to do that again. I'm going to start out, but I don't know how long I'll do it. I'll try to do it for a while, but my strict diet of no eggs, dairy and gluten, which I did for a while because I technically have allergies to those things, and if you say "I've seen you eat those things," it's because I've eaten those things a lot because they don't make me tremendously sick, but they aren't good for my stomach and for my

health. So we'll see how long that resolution lasts, but my hope is that I share it with you and you know and you can encourage me in that. Maybe there are some resolutions that you've made that you hope last. But so often we make resolutions and they don't last.

Today, though, we're going to look at **a resolution that lasts**. It's something that Peter is going to write about and encourage us to see that this will last. It's an encouragement of who we are and what God has done for us. It's not a temporary thing. It's not a thing we have to worry about running out of. It's something that lasts forever.

As Peter writes, he is writing to people who he calls "chosen exiles." This isn't in the section that we're reading but this is in the introduction for the letter. He is writing to people who feel out of place, that feel like the world is against them, but he is calling them "chosen"—they are elect. They are loved by God. So he is encouraging them. Even if you feel like the world is against you, you can still have hope and peace. He is going to explain why. But do you ever feel that way?—that the world is against you, that the world is against Christianity, or just that the world has changed. As we look at the New Year, I think it's easy to see that or to feel that way.

It's 2025. I was doing some shut-in visits today and I was talking to people. "Do you believe it's 2025?" They say "Oh, it's hard to believe!" I was in high school 25 years ago! Can you believe the turn of the millennium, 2,000, was 25 years ago?! People didn't even think we were going to make it past 2,000—the Y2K bug—and now that is 25 years ago! Think of all the things that have changed. If you look up online and look at what things were like in the 90's—I think about music when I was in high school and a little bit before that, that's like if we are listening to that music now that would be like when I was riding around with my parents and we'd listen to the "oldies" from the 60's and 70's. We used to do that all the time. But that's what the music I grew up with is to this generation! It's like "oldies!" Oh my gosh! The world has changed. I think every generation every year feels like it changes all the more. But we have a lot of hold onto. As we know that the world changes, the world is kind of against Christianity, we have something to hold onto.

As Peter writes to these people that he calls "exiles," we're exiles but what can we hold onto. He says, ²²***Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart.*** Notice what he starts out by saying this resolution is going to be and what we want to focus on is the truth. But what is this truth? *It's a resolution in the truth of the Gospel.* If you read this in the wrong way and talk about "obeying the truth," sometimes when we think about "obeying" we put all the onus and things on us. But really, when we are obeying the truth, it's all about Gospel; the truth of the Bible, the truth of God's Word. The truth of who God is and His love for us. When you understand "obeying," it's really

“belief,” “faith.” Does that change the idea of obeying the truth a little bit for you or make it something that sounds like Law, like “You have to obey!” and change it into this beautiful picture of the Gospel truth? That God has loved you.

Why is it important to have that foundation in the truth of the Gospel? Imagine making a resolution and trying to improve or focus on the right thing, like a diet. And someone says “I have a great idea for you, a great diet. Eat a bag of M&M’s every day.” That’s a great suggestion, but how is that going to work out for you? You’ll probably realize after a little while that is not a good idea. But if you’re not founded in the truth, then you can do all you want and it’s not going to work out. But when we are founded in the truth and understand that truth is Gospel and it’s worked through God, what blessings we have and what peace we have. So to understand what he then says stems from this idea of understanding the truth of the Gospel so that as we obey the truth, you can have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart.

How does this happen? He says, ²³***For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.*** Notice again, this is a resolution of love, not like we’re going back in time to the 60s-70s—“A revolution of love!” It’s an encouragement to love one another, love one another deeply. How can I do this? I can do this through the living and enduring Word of God. The only way I can do this is because I’ve been born again, not of this perishable seed but of an imperishable seed, by the love of God, the Word of God, the living Word of God that takes my sinful nature and what is sewn to die because of Adam and our sinful nature, is now sewn in to be immortal. We can love, but that love comes from God because He has made us that way, because He cleanses that sinful nature. He washes it clean. *It’s a resolution of love (from God).*

It’s fascinating that here it talks about how you’ve been born again. In the New Testament there are different times that it talks about being born again—here in 1 Peter, in James, in John 3, and in Titus 3. Sometimes it talks about the Word. Sometimes it talks about being born again by, of course, Baptism. So which is it? Are you born again by the Word or Baptism? It’s by both. But it’s the working of God that creates that in us. We are able to love because this flows from God.

An encouragement for all of you—we’ve been reading this book on Sunday nights called Unoffendable. In a few weeks (I think it’s only 2-3 weeks), we are going to start that study on Sunday mornings. We’re not reading through the whole book, but we are going to have a shorter study on it. The book really focuses on how we can love one another (as Peter explains) because we understand the love God has for us. If I am forgiven, if I have been washed clean, then I can love others in this amazing way. Isn’t that a great resolution to think about? To understand the love that God has for me more so that I can love others and to not be offended by so many things that happen in the world and just say “Oh, God loves me. I’m okay. I can love that person, too.” Now,

it's more complex and we talk about that, but what a great thing that we can love others knowing that "I am loved and redeemed and I can love and forgive others in the same way."

But why do we hold onto this and why is this really something that lasts is what is quoted, and if you heard a lot of the passages that we read today talk about "dust" and "returning to dust" as time goes on. Here again, Peter quotes from Isaiah 40. He says, ²⁴**For, "All people are like grass (very similar to the Psalm that we read, too), and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall,** ²⁵**but the word of the Lord endures forever."** Notice that our resolutions are short so often. We want to keep them for a long time, but they don't last very long. Our lifespans, we get to live quite a while, but in the grand scheme of things they are pretty short. There are so many things in our life that really we think is long, but it's pretty short. What does last, though, is the Word of God and His love for us. This resolution of focusing on Christ and His love for us is *a resolution with eternal consequences*.



You may have seen this. Some pastors have this up in their rooms a lot. It's something held a lot by Lutherans. It's VDMA. It's Verbum Domini Manet in Aeternum. You can guess what that means. It's Latin and it means "the Word of the Lord endures forever." The Word of the Lord endures forever.

As you prioritize and think about what you want to do this year, there is a lot you can think about. Maybe you want to remodel something in your house or a loved one's house. Maybe you want to work on something. Maybe you want to read a certain amount of books, spend more time with kids/grandkids/great grandkids, or spend more time doing the things you love. I look back a little bit and for some reason, it takes me back to one of Pastor Mike Novotny's books, What's Big Starts Small, and he talks about how much time we spend doing things and not thinking about them. He talks about how much time we spend watching football. You have your team and you end up watching Sunday night and you watch Monday night and you watch Thursday night now and on Christmas Day. I was watching and often it's just on in the background, but one thing that caught my eye was seeing the people in the stands and how angry they get at a player dropping a ball or something insignificant and we are so up in arms and so angry about this thing. Are we going to remember this the next day? Again, I love sports. Whatever fan you are, we are going to get excited for the post season coming up, Packers, even Lions are in the post season this year. That's not to say you shouldn't enjoy those things. But what lasts forever?

You can go back in your year and see what things you focused on that really meant something for you this year. But there is one thing I know that continues to have

value—being here, being in the Word, being in Bible studies, going to small groups, studying God’s Word in different ways, sharing a prayer, being in prayer with the Lord, praying for others, sharing God’s Word with a loved one, sharing forgiveness with another. These things have eternal consequences because the Word of the Lord stands forever. It lasts forever. Someday our bodies will enter into the grave, but our souls will go on and the Word of the Lord stands forever and that faith that is given will stand forever. Why do we know that? We know that because this is worked by God. *It’s a resolution worked by God.*

When we look at all these things, we can think about obeying or loving others and how following God’s Word is so important, but what gave you faith? The Word, the Holy Spirit working through the Word—that power through Baptism as the water and Word forgives your sins and gives you faith. What saves you is not how much you do this or how well you do any of these things but our Savior on the cross. He has done it all.

As we start this journey in the beginning of the church year, as He is in the manger and as He was in your place, we heard this Sunday as He was a child and lived perfectly, He is going to go all the way down to Jerusalem and He is going to go to the cross and say “It is finished” as He dies for the sins of the world. It’s done! We can set resolutions. We can focus on God’s Word. But you can’t add anything to your salvation. What good news that is that He has done it all. That all of this now, and then as we talk about loving, is freedom—to be in His Word, to love God, to love others, to set these resolutions of growing closer to Him—it’s all done in freedom! It’s not to earn anything. It’s not because it’s required. It’s because we’ve been loved and now we can love others. What freedom we have! What joy we have to go forward in the Lord.

But take note of those things that do last forever. That love of God is eternal. The Word of God is eternal. Your souls are eternal. The souls of your loved ones are eternal. Share this Word and have this resolution that lasts, to be in the Word and to cherish the Word that is eternal and the truth of the Gospel. Amen.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [\(Philippians 4:7\)](#) Amen.