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**January 5, 2020 – Blessed, Chosen and Adopted**

**Given by Rev. Mattei**

A common precept in our Western culture is quick to admonish us: “Do not just stand there. Do something.” And it is also a common practice at the beginning of a new year to look at ourselves and the year just passed and take up resolutions for an improved way of living. The question is unless we know *where* we want to go, it’s hard to know *how* to get there. To strategize without a plan will produce results that have neither weight nor meaning. We’d be spinning our wheels getting nowhere and only giving us the shallow satisfaction of conducting a busy life. Where there is no vision nor plan to implement the vision, we spend days, weeks, and months feeling empty and dissatisfied with nothing to show for our efforts. Then we wonder: “Where did the time go? What kind of legacy do I leave behind?”

We do want to spend our time in productive ways that can benefit ourselves, our loved ones, and possibly those around us, near and far. We consider what we can do to improve our lot and that of our neighbors, and we take on the challenge not to stand there but to do something. We start taking on commitments such us praying more, eating less, exercising more, stop gossiping, controlling our anger, avoiding judgments, being more forgiving and so on. We look at the past with disappointment and at the future with expectations, and we tend to pick new year resolutions with anxiety and wishful thinking.

But maybe we should reverse the maxim and stop doing something before we stand there. It’s not a matter of doing more of something and less of something else. It’s a matter of being in touch with our truest self and God’s original plan. Perhaps what we need to focus on is less on doing and more on being. When we slow down we have a chance of realizing what the author of the letter to the Ephesians has to say in true Pauline spirit: we are blessed in Christ, chosen in Christ and adopted through Christ for the purpose of enjoying our life in God and praising God’s grace. This is what we pray for in the Lord’s Prayer: Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Wouldn’t practicing our faith and living for the praise of God’s glory be a good resolution for the new year?

The Christ event that was envisioned and sparked by the creative love of God has achieved its full measure in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The projection of God’s salvific plan takes all of creation toward the fulfillment of that same Christ event: the whole universe aims at that fullness when all things will be gathered up in him, “things in heaven and things on earth.” Salvation is inclusive and cosmic. In God’s eternal plan, no one is condemned, excluded, and left behind.

As we begin this new year together what part of ourselves, as individuals and as a community of believers, needs to resemble more the Christ model so that the whole creation can praise and glorify God? What ethical behavior should be polished and set free so that the truth of God be made manifest and the world might set its hope on Christ?

As we look at ourselves, we may find things we don’t like. But let us not lose heart and trust the seal of the Holy Spirit with which we are marked and let us work towards the redemption of the whole world with renewed hope, trust, and courage. Let us employ the spiritual blessings and heavenly powers we have received in Christ to let the world know that “Love has come, a light in the darkness...Love is life everlasting and free...Love is Jesus within and among us...Love is the peace our hearts are seeking.”[[1]](#footnote-1) May God be praised and His Truth made known. Amen.

1. *Love Has Come*, ELW 292 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)