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## Sermon on Newton's Hymn for New Year's Eve

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on the floor of the last Delegate Synod, resolutions will never wipe out the "lodge evil." That is verily true. Paul did not employ resolutions to purge out the "impurity leaven" from the church at Corinth or the "work-righteousness leaven" from the Galatian congregations. He used the Law with telling force where the Law was needed to show his readers the exceeding sinfulness of their particular brand of "leaven"; but in the final analysis it was the Gospel which he employed as the effective remedy to bring about the cure. To the Corinthians he wrote: "Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us," and to the Galatians: "Christ is become of no effect unto you whosoever of you are justified by the Law; ye are fallen from grace." The crucified and risen Christ, the sinner's only Hope in life and death, was both the basis and the heart of his appeal. That message of the crucified Christ is still effective to-day. It has lost none of its power; it still works miracles. Let our Christians be told that the issue calls for a decision either for Christ or against Christ; and let us plead, in behalf of their salvation, for a decision for Christ. If this will be done in each congregation earnestly and conscientiously, the result will be marvelous. As in Paul's day, so also in our time the Word of God will prove itself — a power of God.

J. T. MUELLER.

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## Sermon on Newton's Hymn for New Year's Eve.

Ps. 90, 9 b.

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We are met in our sanctuary for the last time in the year of our Lord 1929. As we began this year in Jesus' name, so we wish to end it also in His name, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever!

Many thoughts crowd our hearts to-night. We think of the past year, and the multifarious events of another stage of our life's pilgrimage flit rapidly across the screen of memory. We think of the coming year and speculate as to what may lie in store for us behind the dark and impenetrable curtain of the future. Such thoughts come to Christian and worldling alike. But while the worldling plunges himself into an orgy of pleasure at this time, the Christian turns to serious meditation.

That is what you have come here to do. To that end I have chosen for our prayerful consideration one of the great hymns of the Church, namely, John Newton's hymn for New Year's Eve "While with Ceaseless Course the Sun." And may the precious Holy Spirit be with us in this hour!

Sermon on Newton's Hymn for New Year's Eve.

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1.

The first stanza of this hymn reads:—

While with ceaseless course the sun  
Hasted through the former year,  
Many souls their race have run,  
Nevermore to meet us here;  
Fixed in an eternal state,  
They have done with all below;  
We a little longer wait,  
But how little none can know.

Time flies, but we do not keep pace with it. We start out on life's journey, but we do not long continue. Some are here at the dawn of a year, but at its close they are only a memory. Not all who worshiped with us and counted themselves members of our congregation at the beginning of this year are alive to-night.

There is no flock, however watched and tended,  
But one dead lamb is there;  
There is no fireside, howsoe'er defended,  
But has one vacant chair.

This year was the last for some of those who were near and dear to us. They have finished their course.

Each day, each month, each year, presents its toll of dead. It is appointed unto men once to die. The old must die, and the young may die. And after death, what? After death the Judgment! With death the die is cast, the time of grace is past. Then follows either shame or glory, salvation or condemnation. There is neither a turning back for another chance, nor a possibility of losing the crown that has been won.

Fixed in an eternal state,  
They are done with all below.

All things that were of the earth—troubles, cares, anxieties, pleasures, ambition, wealth, health, labor, all these things are left behind. Terrible the thought of standing at the end of a wasted life, with all hopes blasted and the cry on one's lips: "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved!" Blissful the thought of going into eternity trusting implicitly in Him who has washed our garments in His blood, the Lamb that sits on the throne and welcomes every penitent sinner to His gracious bosom!

The poet now contrasts the condition of those who have gone before with ours:—

We a little longer wait,  
But how little none can know.

We are still here. We have life and hope.

We may be lonely since our nearest and dearest once have departed. We may be longing for our own departure, saying with St. Paul: "I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ." But we

must await our Lord's call, for we know neither the day nor the hour when our Master will come.

Or we may be planning a long life. So did many of those who are no longer in our midst. No man can say that he will be here a year, a month hence, to-morrow.

But how little none can know.

The call of the dying year therefore is this: "We all do fade as a leaf." "In the midst of life we are in death." "Prepare to meet your God." "Now is the time of grace, now is the day of salvation." "Set thy house in order, for thou shalt die and not live."

Death floats on every passing breeze,  
And lurks in every flower;  
Each season has its own disease,  
Its perils every hour.

## 2.

Even though we live to see many more years, though we outlive all our relatives and friends, and though we pass the allotted span of human life, yet in the end we, too, must die. And so the poet continues with another important truth:—

As the winged arrow flies  
Speedily the mark to find;  
As the lightning from the skies  
Darts and leaves no trace behind,  
Swiftly thus our fleeting days  
Bear us down life's rapid stream,  
Upward, Lord, our spirits raise;  
All below is but a dream.

We have heard the story of the servant of King Philip of Macedonia whose duty it was to awaken his master every morning by saying: "Philip, remember thou art mortal! *Memento mori!*" Like that servant, the poet would have us remember the fact that the flight of time relentlessly carries us nearer to our graves. "Remember, thou art mortal!" And what should our reaction be, when the passing day, the passing year, serves as a *memento mori* to us?

Shall we take the attitude of the fatalist, who asks cynically: "What's the use?" Shall we be like the sensualist, who declares: "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die"? Or shall we follow the pessimist, who looks into the future with grim forebodings, dreading to leave this house of clay for fear of those things which may come in eternity?

Who would burdens bear  
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,  
But that the dread of something after death,  
The undiscovered country from whose bourn  
No traveler returns, puzzles the will  
And makes us rather bear the ills we have  
Than to fly to others that we know not of?

Shall that be our reaction? No. The poet asks, instead, this boon:—

Upward, Lord, our spirit raise;  
All below is but a dream.

That should be our prayer to-night and every night. What this life has in store for us is of such a varied nature that we need the enlightening of the Spirit of our God to keep our own spirit raised heavenward and not drooping earthward. We should be reminded that we have here no continuing city, but that we seek one to come, that we are "strangers before Thee and sojourners, as were all our fathers; our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is no abiding"; and our constant prayer should be: "Lord, so teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

3.

The poet now directs our attention to other thoughts following from the foregoing, which should fill our hearts at the conclusion of a year. "Thanks for mercies past receive."

Looking backward upon our lives, upon the year that is ending, what do we behold? The goodness of the Lord. It has been with us daily, in the morning, at noon, and during the night-watches. He has crowned us with loving-kindness and tender mercies. He has given us meat in due season. He has opened His hand and satisfied the desire of every living thing.

"What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" "When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord, Thy God, for the good land which He hath given thee."

O bless the Lord, my soul!  
Nor let His mercies lie  
Forgotten in unthankfulness  
And without praises die.

However, the goodness of the Lord reminds us of our sins. He was rich toward us in blessings. For He is the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and in truth. He has been good to us in spite of our sins and failings. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning." Therefore Newton rightly adds the line:—

Pardon for our sins renew.

With Daniel of old we must confess to-night: "We have sinned and committed iniquity and have done wickedly and have rebelled, even by departing from Thy precepts and from Thy judgments. Neither have we hearkened unto Thy servants, the prophets, which spake in Thy name. . . . O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto Thee, but unto us confusion of faces." And in deep humility, truly repen-

tant, trusting in the merits of our dear Savior, we ask the Lord to blot out all our transgressions of the past year and to remember them no more against us.

But that brings another requirement to our attention. We do not go into the new year forgiven unless we have the firm resolve in our hearts to sin no more. Gratitude for the mercies received should prompt us to pledge anew our lives to the service of our Lord and to say with the poet:—

Ye men and angels, witness now,  
Before the Lord we speak;  
To Him we make our solemn vow,  
A vow we may not break,  
That long as life itself shall last  
Ourselves to Christ we yield;  
Nor from His cause will we depart  
Or ever quit the field.

And so we pray with Newton:—

Teach us henceforth how to live,  
With eternity in view.

But that is impossible without the continued use of the means of grace. Have we been as faithful in our church-going during the past year as we should have been? In our attendance at the Lord's Table? In our daily devotions? Every neglect of these God-given means makes us that much more susceptible to the attacks of the Evil One, against whom we must put on the whole armor of God; for "with might of ours can naught be done, soon were our loss effected." Let us therefore also resolve to be more diligent in the use of Word and Sacrament, all of us, young and old alike, in the coming new year.

Then we may be assured that the closing words of our hymn will be fulfilled for us:—

Bless Thy Word to young and old,  
Fill us with a Savior's love;  
And when life's short tale is told,  
May we dwell with Thee above!

Yes, we are assured in that same inspired Word that He which has begun the good work in us will perform the same until the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In this spirit, then, let us conclude the old year and begin the new. No matter what the future may have in store for us, we know that it will be a blessed year for all those who are the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus; for all things must work together for good to them that love God.

We do not know if we shall live through the new year. It may be our last in this vale of tears. Let us live with eternity in view.

Let each year bring us closer to the Savior and farther away from the love of the world, until we already here live in keen anticipation of the joys and glories of eternity, having —

Eyes that grow dim to the earth and its glory,  
See but the brighter, the heavenly glow;  
Ears that are dull to the world and its story,  
Drink in the songs that from Paradise flow.

It will not be long.

'Twill soon be o'er;

Far down the west  
Life's sun is setting, and I see the shore  
Where I shall rest!

Amen.

W. G. POLACK.

## Entwürfe über die Eisenacher Evangelienreihe.

### Neujahr.

Luf. 4, 16—21.

Luf. 2, 21. Neujahr — Jesus. Noch steht der Weihnachtsbaum und lenkt unsere Aufmerksamkeit auf das Christkind. Unsere Lieder verbinden Neujahr und die Weihnachtstatsache. Ohne Weihnachten keine rechte Neujahrsfeier.

Im Namen des Herrn treten wir ins neue Jahr!

1. Dies soll sein ein Jahr der Gnade — das verheißt uns der Herr.
2. Dies soll sein ein Jahr des gläubigen Gehorsams — das versprechen wir dem Herrn.

#### 1.

Der Herr predigt in Nazareth. Text ist eine Weissagung über sein Amt, zusammengefaßt in B. 19. Damit ist die ganze neutestamentliche Zeit gemeint, also auch das Jahr 1930. Der dreieinige Gott will dies Jahr zu einem angenehmen machen. Der Herr sendet seinen Geist auf den Sohn, damit der als Priester uns Gnade erwerbe, als Prophet sie anbiete und schenke, als König in Gnade sein Volk regiere. Was das heißt, wird wunderschön ausgeführt B. 18.

Amen, bankrotten Sündern soll die frohe Botschaft gebracht werden, daß ihre Schuld bezahlt, daß sie schuldenfrei sind. Zerstoßenen Herzen wird gesagt: Ps. 34, 19; 147, 3; Jes. 57, 15—19; Matth. 11, 28 f. Gefangene, vom Satan Geknechtete, Eph. 2, 2, 3; Röm. 6, 19—21, sollen hören, daß sie freie Gotteskinder sind, die da wandeln nach Phil. 3, 20; 1 Petr. 1, 22; Gal. 5, 22. Seliger Dienst der Freiheit! Blinde sollen wissen, daß nicht mehr gilt Jes. 59, 9—12; 8, 22, sondern 2 Kor. 4, 6; Jes. 29, 18—20; 42, 16. Himmlisches Licht auf dem Lebensweg. Den Verwundeten, verwundet im Kampf mit der