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Announce new elders and next Sunday's annual meeting.

We are in a season of transition as Tim, our worship leader, retired last week and we are moving from myself to Christian Clark as the senior pastor over the next several months. But here's what I want to say. God can do great things in seasons of transitions. Sometimes it's when He does His most amazing things. We are not in a holding pattern of any kind just waiting until the transition is over. I am not winding it down. Far from it. This is God's church and Jesus is our Shepherd. Every week we come with expectant hearts to worship the living God who sent His Son who has given us new life. We have great reason to praise and glorify Jesus every week. He is our King. No matter who is standing here preaching, we come with expectant hearts to hear what God wants to say to us through His word. As we enter 2026, expect God to do amazing things in our lives and in this, His church. Let's pray asking God to have His way with us throughout 2026.

Pray

Happy New Year. Are you ready for all that 2026 may bring? What are your expectations for the year? Do you believe what they're saying about all this economic prosperity coming our way? Or do you believe what others are saying that we're going into a severe downturn. Maybe a bigger question is does it matter?

We stand between what was in 2025 and what will be in 2026. Don't you wish that 2026 would be the year that everything is put right? Every generation lives with a quiet ache for renewal. We renovate houses, update phones, reinvent careers, and even try to reinvent ourselves—because deep down we know something isn't quite right. We sense that this world, as beautiful as it can be, is not the way it's supposed to be.

The Bible does not deny that longing. In fact, God Himself has placed this longing in us. He has given us this longing for wholeness, for peace, for everything to be put right.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 says God has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart.

There is within each of us a hope that there is an eternity that is good, where everything is put right. Scripture closes in Revelation with the promise that one day everything will be as our hearts now long for it to be. Before I read the passage, I need to give it a little context as to where this falls in the end of days' timeline. I realize that Christians differ on some of these points so show me a little grace if you interpret Scripture a bit different than this.

When we get down to the end of time for this world, there will be a 7-year time of extreme tribulation for the whole world. It will be worse than anything the world has ever seen with rampant death, oceans turning to blood, meteors striking the earth, earthquakes, etc. At the beginning of that period God will send two witnesses who will testify to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and many will come to faith. Also, during this time, a beast will rise to worldly power known as the anti-Christ. He will eventually kill these two witnesses, who many think will be Moses and Elijah come back to earth. The anti-Christ will leave their dead bodies in the street for three days and the world will rejoice over their death. On the third day, they will not only be raised to life by God but raptured to heaven in front of the whole world. At the end of this great tribulation, The Lord Jesus will return to earth with His heavenly host which I believe includes us who have been with Him in heaven during the great tribulation. Jesus will wage war against the beast and in short order defeat him and locking up Satan for 1000 years. During that 1000-year period, Jesus will be the King of the earth. We who were raptured, will have our glorified, supernatural bodies. Yet, during this millennium, there will be mortals still alive who have survived the tribulation. These mortals will continue to have children who will need to come to faith in Jesus if they are to be in the eternal kingdom. It will be a time of great peace, not only among people, but even the animal world will be at peace. The lion will lay with the lamb, Isaiah has prophesied. But that is not the end. When the 1000 years is over, Satan will be released one last time and there will be a short conflict where Jesus will defeat Satan once and for all. At that time, Jesus will judge all who have not believed in Him for their salvation, sending them to a Christless eternity in a place completely void of anything good. Those who believed in Jesus for their salvation will then enter a new place for all of eternity. Which brings us to Revelation 21. This is in your future if you have believed in Jesus for your salvation.

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea. **2** And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. **3** And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, **4** and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.” **5** And He who sits on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” And He said, “Write, for these words are faithful and true.” **6** Then He said to me, “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. **7** “He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. **8** “But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part *will be* in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

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God wants us to know that there is coming a day when all things will be made new. Everything will be made right as our hearts now desire. There will be no more sorrow, death, mourning, or crying or pain. All that is gone. God wants us focused on the future because it changes the way we live today. Sometimes I hear Christians say we shouldn't talk about the end times or the return of Jesus because it scares people or doesn't have any bearing on how we live from day to day. I could not disagree more, and I would contend that Scripture disagrees with that. Did you know that the most popular subject in the New Testament is salvation. Second to that is the return of Christ. Almost a third of the New Testament refers to these coming events in some way.

The Hope of His Return Changes How We Live

Don't you act differently when matters become urgent or something seems imminent? I don't know about you, but I have watched a ton of football this past week. If a team gets behind by, let's say, 14 points but it's in the first half, not much changes in how they play the game. But if a team is behind by 14 and there's just five minutes left in the game. Everything changes in how they play the game because the matter has now become urgent. Scripture wants us always living as if we're in the final minute before His return because we will live differently.

I remember when I was in college and on the first day of the semester, the professor would announce that there was a term paper due in this class, but it wasn't due until the last week of class. Now, some students began working on it immediately, but if you're like me and you hear it's not due for a few months, you don't do anything about it. But at some point, the matter will become urgent and your outlook, your study habits change.

I'll give you just a few examples from Scripture. In Matthew 25, we have the parable of the 10 virgins where five were watchful for the return of the bridegroom and had oil in their lamps while five felt they had plenty of time or didn't concern themselves with His coming and were caught off guard. Five lived unto the coming bridegroom and five lived unto themselves.

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In 2 Peter 3, there are people who mock Christ's return as if it is a long way off. It says those who don't want to hear about the return of Jesus do so because they want to follow after their own lusts. What an indictment.

If you knew Jesus was coming in 2026 and you had just a few months left on this earth, would it change the way you live? Would it change your conversations? Would it change the way you deal with temptation? The point is, Scripture teaches it shouldn't, because God wants us to always live as if we expect Him today.

Titus 2:11–13

11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus,

Philippians 3:20

20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 9:28

28 so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.

Do you live as if it's a long way off or has no bearing on your current life or do you live with your mind's eye longing for His return; the day you see Him face to face; the day He receives you into His eternal kingdom; the day all is made new.

In the passage I read, the word "new" occurs three times and the same Greek word is used in all three cases, and this Greek word doesn't just mean something new like you got a new truck today. Because that word could also mean something bad like you got a new disease. This word means new like a superior new thing has arrived. It's the same word we see in Mark 2 where Jesus says you can't pour the new wine of the new covenant of grace into the old wineskins of the old covenant of the law because it is too good for the former. It's the same word we see in 2 Corinthians 5:17 where it says that anyone in Christ is a new creature, the old is gone and the new has come.

God is All About Making Things New

There will be a new heaven and a new earth. This doesn't mean that it will just be different. No, this means the new existence will be unlike the former in any way and far superior. You see, the old earth, our current earth is stained by the ravages of sin. It is a fallen, unredeemed, sinful world, even during the millennium. So a far superior, better existence had to be created that is completely unstained, pure. For this is where we will live forever. The new heaven and the new earth. That's two of the three uses of new.

The third is when God says, "Behold, I am making all things new." Words fail me to adequately relate to you the richness of this statement. Here's my best effort. He starts with "Behold" which is God's way of saying I am about to tell you something that deserves extra special notice on your part. It is a pronouncement of the Creator to His creation. Then He says I am making all things new. It doesn't say, I will at some point make things new. In fact, the verb making is in the present tense and the active voice meaning this is happening now; that it is intentional and on-going. God is saying about

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Himself that He is always bringing newness. It's who He is. He can act in no other way. Reminds me of Lamentations 3:22-23.

Lamentations 3:22-23

22 The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. 23 They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.

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Remember when Jesus gave you comfort in that situation years ago? He's got a new one for you today. Remember how God worked out that problem last year? He's got a new one for you today. Spiritually speaking, God creates a newness each and every day. He never gets stale or old. Isaiah 43 - "behold, I am doing a new thing." Ezekiel 36 - I will give you a new heart and a new spirit. 2 Cor. 5 - If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. Eph. 4 - Put on the new self, created after the likeness of God. Luke 22 - Jesus says, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

God says: "I am making all things new." He does it.

Lots of people make new year's resolutions which is relying on themselves to pull it off. I saw something on FaceBook this last week that said that Planet Fitness was offering for convenience, a two-week membership for New Year's. You don't need to start a new regimen, make a new commitment, turn over a new leaf, you need to turn to Him who is always making all things new.

We live in a world that is in trouble. We see things speeding towards the prophecies we read about in Scripture regarding the end of time. There would be great cause for alarm, but we fear not because we belong to the One who is making all things new.

How are you facing this new year? Is it with a measure of pessimism? Maybe you're going to just try harder to achieve greater goals for your worldly life. Could it be that on this first Sunday of the year, you just need to turn your eyes toward the coming King; expect His return and notice the new He is always creating around you. That's what he does because that's who He is.

We often close this first service of the year with communion, and we are going to do that today. Often, we do so to give thanks for what God has done and place the new year in His hands. And that's a good thing. Yet, today, what if we made it only about Him who is making all things new. In a moment we will simply open the time for communion, and it is your time. There are several stations throughout the Worship Center where you can go and get the elements. You can take them to your seat, or any place in the room. Maybe share it with a friend or your family. Maybe it is a very personal, private encounter you want to have with Jesus today. It is your time, your communion with the One who is always creating newness in our lives. After some time, the worship team will lead us in a closing song.

Prayer