



## **New Year's Eve Greetings From Pastor Rich December 31, 2020**

Saludos en el nombre de Jesucristo!

This week, as I travel from Ohio to New Mexico, I do so in the final week of 2020. As I drive down the road, alone with nothing but my thoughts, I have been reflecting on all the events of this past year.

I know that years from now, many of us may look back on 2020 with some fond memories. Like every year, people got married and had children in 2020 and there were many occasions for joy. For me, 2020 started a new chapter in my ministry when I accepted the call to be your pastor at LPPC, so I will always have at least one happy memory from 2020. But for our society and our world, 2020 was surely one of the most difficult years of our lifetimes for obvious reasons. Perhaps some would even say that 2020 was more difficult than the years of the Second World War or the Great Depression. Since I did not live in these eras, I will leave it to those who did to make such a judgment. But with everything that I witnessed taking place in our society, I can at least say that 2020 was the most difficult year of my lifetime.

Whenever God's people live through dark and tragic times, they have often asked "Why does God allow this to happen?" When we consider these days of pandemic, it may seem for many people that if God both cares about the suffering of innocent people and is powerful enough to prevent it, then God ought to prevent it from happening. The question of why God allows bad things to happen to innocent people is a question that has been asked for thousands of years and there are no easy answers to this question. Nor do I think that I could say anything in a weekly email, a sermon, or even a series of sermons that would add anything to the answers that people have already come up with to this question for thousands of years. If you are interested, then together we can explore some of the answers that have been given to this question. You can decide which answers, if any, you find satisfactory and which you find unsatisfactory. But if you have already heard these answers, I am afraid I can't add anything to what you have already heard.

Regardless of how this question should be answered, however, here is what I can say with absolute certainty. There is no doubt in my mind that whenever someone suffer and dies from this pandemic or they watch a loved one suffer and die, God suffers with that person. There is no doubt in my mind that for every tear we shed, God sheds two and there is no doubt in my mind that God's promise that we will live in a world where there is no more suffering, pain and death will one day be fulfilled. I know these convictions of mine don't answer the question of why God allows so much suffering in the first place, but for me at least, they make the need to find an answer to this question a little less urgent.

Finally, my prayer for all of us is that 2021 will be a much better year. I am optimistic that it will be and I hope you are, too.

This Sunday, January 3, our scripture readings will be Isaiah 60:1-6 and Matthew 2:1-12. My sermon will be titled *Following the Star*. I look forward to being with you on Zoom at 9am!

Have a Blessed and Happy New Year,

Pastor Rich