

MESSAGE FROM PASTOR DAN

January 8, 2026

Dear Church Family,

Happy New Year! Our family prays that you've had a great season of celebration with family and friends. We pray that the peace of the Lord Jesus has enveloped you in ways that perhaps you've never experienced. We pray that family ties were strengthened, old friendships renewed, and times of worship ministered to your hungry souls.

This time of year, is always a bit odd in my thinking. Realistically we are smack dab in the middle of the year, and yet the calendar tells us that it's a New Year. And so, we celebrate. It's good and right that we do. There's something refreshing about newness. New things, new opportunities, new relationships all afford us a chance to begin again, or to try something different. It brings joy! Especially when our circumstances around us may tell us different. It's easy in our climate to allow the short days and long nights, the coldness of the weather, all of this, to get us down. And so, to celebrate a New Year, the chance to begin again, yes, it is good!

I want to encourage you as you look at the year before you to seek the joy of the Lord. This Joy is very much different to that which the world designates as 'joy.' The joy of the Lord is a settled peace within your heart that helps you to weather through the tough and difficult days that life brings. In Nehemiah 8, the people of God gathered to hear the Law of God read. The day should have been a day of celebration because the wall that was built was built in a radically fast amount of time. And yet as Ezra the priest begins to read the Law, the peoples' response is one of weeping and mourning! (Not something you'd necessarily expect, but none the less, there they were, crying!) I believe this was a beautiful thing because it gave a glimpse into the heart of the people. I think as they gazed into the mirror of the Law of God, what they saw reflected back was a sinful and rebellious people, and it was this that caused them to weep. (Sadly, the church today often misses this.) But there amid the crying, (dare I say amid the repentance) Nehemiah steps forth and turns their attention to the Joy of the Lord. After years in exile, the remnant had returned and rebuilt the city's walls! And so, Nehemiah calls them to joy! Neh. 8:10b "And do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." It was like a new, fresh start for God's people! Isn't that just like God? Yes, there are times for mourning over sin and the yuckiness of life, but God in Christ has come to give YOU a new start! And this time the new start is in his Son! So, take heart, take joy and celebrate what the Lord has done and what he is doing in and through His people.

There is much to be joyful about here at OEPC. Look around you and let's celebrate as we move into the new year. I mentioned on Sunday, one way to jump into the New Year with joy is to get into God's word. You'll find in both narthex's a limited number of copies of Robert Murray M'Cheyne's reading plan to read through the Bible in a year, or follow the link below. If you've never done it, this is the year! Grab a copy and start reading!

Sunday, January 4th marks the first of two Sundays where you have an opportunity to bring your pledge cards and place them on the altar, where they will remain for the year, acting as a witness to your financial commitment to God and His ministry here in this place.

Friends, let's make it our top priority to grow deeper in our faith this year!

God Bless!

Pastor Dan

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