

## No Fear for the New Year- 2013

"...Your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast." (Psalm 139:10)

Life holds no surprises for our loving and merciful God. No path is unknown to him; no circumstance unsettling. Because the future is perfectly clear to our omniscient heavenly Father, we Christians have the full assurance that we can follow wherever he leads us, whether that way is marked by calm or by storm. This is important for us to remember as we anticipate the new year which God has graciously given us. As we approach this new year, we can do so with confidence because we too say of our God, "Your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. "

While making a brief Christmas address to the people of the British Empire back in 1939, King George VI spoke of his faith in God's leading. At that time World War II had begun, and Great Britain faced the onslaughts of Hitler's relentless military barrage. As King George spoke to the people on that Christmas Day, he concluded his remarks with a few lines that had been written by a lady named Minnie Louise Haskins some thirty years earlier. They are these words which say:

"And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year: 'Give me a light that I may tread 'safely into the unknown.' And he replied: 'Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God. That shall be to you better than a light and safer than a known way.'"

That was good advice! Like Great Britain back in 1939, we as individuals and also as a congregation are facing a future whose trademark is change overlaid with varying and perhaps foreboding circumstances. And yet we don't have to fear. We have Someone to guide us' even in the darkest night, and that Someone is our Lord and God himself. This is what King David realized when he said, "Your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast." God's abiding presence enables us to face the future with absolute

confidence. We know that our God forgives the past, controls the present, and holds the future. With the poet we too should say as we go through the new year of 20 13:

"I may not always understand  
The way that you will lead,  
But, Lord, in faith I'll clasp your hand  
And trust you for each need."

It is customary at the end of one year and the beginning of another to review the past year, give a few statistics, and plan ahead for the new year. It is wise to do this. In the following pages you will read the statistics of our congregation here at Good Shepherd -the opportunities our God gave us to serve him with our worship, talents, and financial treasures in the year of 2012. These statistics, however, can't show the truly important things in our personal Christianity. They can't show the increase in faith - or the decrease of faith - in the hearts of our members. They can only, in a rather limited way, show the evidence of faith.

Of all the manifold blessings that our Lord graciously showered upon our congregation this past year, the most important ones, of course, were the continued blessings of his holy Word and sacraments, through which we are brought the forgiveness of sins and the assurance of everlasting life in the kingdom of heaven. Throughout 2012 the Lord allowed us to continue teaching and preaching his saving Word - the wonderful message that Jesus lived, suffered, and died as our Substitute to make the perfect atonement for us poor, miserable sinners. May God grant that this will continue to be a blessing that we will enjoy in the future as well.

With regard to this great blessing, however, I must also sadly note that some of the members of our flock were not very regular when it came to feeding their souls in the green pastures of God's Word. Some were rarely in church to hear God's Word and partake of Holy Communion for the strengthening of their faith. Many have never attended one of the three Bible classes that are offered weekly. And what is especially disturbing to me is the indifference and apathy that some have concerning their less than faithful use of these Means of Grace. I pray, therefore, that God will inspire all of us to visit, encourage,

warn, and admonish our fellow members whom we see slipping away from him, so that they may be led by the Holy Spirit to rededicate themselves and their lives to their Savior Jesus.

As we enter into this new year of 2013, we also do so with the knowledge of a sobering reality, and that is, we know that Satan will not tire or retire from his attacks against us, both as individuals and also as a congregation. He will be active among us, hoping to snatch away a lamb or a sheep from the flock of the Good Shepherd, Jesus. He will try to make the members of our congregation unwilling to sacrifice for their Lord, indifferent to the saving Gospel of Jesus, with little love for their Savior and the work of his kingdom. But we can also be sure of our Lord's grace and mercy. We can rest assured that through his Means of Grace he will strengthen and preserve us in our Christian faith, keep us loyal and faithful to him, enthused about his work and filled with love for him. With King David we too can say of our Lord, "Your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

In conclusion, I consider it a true privilege to continue to serve as your pastor, and I would ask for your continued support and cooperation as we all work together in one unified effort to expand the kingdom of our Lord and Savior here at Good Shepherd. I pray that this year in our congregation will be one which truly glorifies our Lord and Savior.

Blessed with you in the love of Jesus,  
Pastor Terry Deters