

**Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church**  
**BETHLEHEM TOOWOOMBA, OUR SAVIOUR LOWOOD, ST JOHN'S AUBIGNY,**  
**ST PAUL'S GREENWOOD, TRINITY MARBURG, TRINITY OAKEY**  
New Year's Day 2025

**HYMNS:** 554 36 324 151 291 508

**INTROIT:** Psalm 8

O LORD, our Lord, how splendid is Your name in all the earth! O set Your glory above the heavens!

Out of the mouths of children and nursing infants, You have laid a strong foundation, because of Your enemies, that You may silence the enemy and the avenger.

When I consider Your heavens, which Your fingers have made, the moon and the stars, which You have set in place, what is man, that You should be mindful of him, and the son of man, that You should take care of him?

You have made him lower than God is for a little while, and You have crowned him with glory and honour.

You have made him master over the works that Your hands have made; You have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and even the beasts of the field, the birds of the sky, and the fish of the sea, which pass through the paths of the seas.

O LORD, our Lord, how splendid is Your name in all the earth!

**COLLECT:** Lord God, You made Your beloved Son, our Saviour, subject to the Law and caused Him to shed His blood on our behalf. Grant us the true circumcision of the Spirit, that our hearts may be made pure from all sins; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

**READINGS:**

Number 6:22-27      The Benediction.

Galatians 3:23-29      Children of God.

Luke 2:21              Naming of Jesus

### **Numbers 6:22-27**

<sup>22</sup> The LORD told Moses, <sup>23</sup> “Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, ‘This is how you shall bless the people of Israel. Say to them: <sup>24</sup> “The LORD bless you and keep you! <sup>25</sup> The LORD make His face shine on you and be gracious to you! <sup>26</sup> The LORD look on you with favour and give you peace!” <sup>27</sup> ““In this way they will put My name on the people of Israel and I shall bless them.””

### **Galatians 3:23-29**

<sup>23</sup> Before the faith came, we were being imprisoned by the Law, locked up until the faith came, which was about to be revealed. <sup>24</sup> Therefore, the Law was our guardian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup> However, now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. <sup>26</sup> For you are all the sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, <sup>27</sup> because all of you who were baptised into Christ put on Christ. <sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither slave nor free. There is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup> Moreover, if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants and heirs according to the promise.

### **Luke 2:21**

<sup>21</sup> On the eighth day, when the time came to circumcise the Baby, He was named “Jesus,” the name that the angel had given Him before He was conceived in the womb.

## **AN ENDING AND BEGINNING**

### **Sermon for New Year’s Day 2025**

#### **Isaiah 51:4-6**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Isaiah 51:4-6:

**“Pay attention to Me, My people! Listen to Me, My nation! For Teaching will go out from Me, and I shall establish My justice in an instant as a light for the peoples. <sup>5</sup> My righteousness is near. My salvation will go out, and My arms will bring justice to the peoples. The coastlands will put their**

**hope in Me and wait eagerly for My arm. <sup>6</sup> Lift up your eyes to the heavens and look at the earth beneath! For the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, and those who dwell in it will die like gnats. However, My salvation will last for ever, and My righteousness will not be frustrated.**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

When one thing begins, another ends. When a church season or church year ends, we mark the time by changing the colours on the altar and on the pastor. The hymns we play reflect a new emphasis, a new focus on the Word of the living God. As the calendar year ends, a new one begins with parties, noisemakers, and so on, and perhaps a bit of overindulgence. Today, people like to take time to mark what's been gained and what has been lost, to share tears and laughs, and to tell stories. A new year is upon us, and we mark the time.

We love to mark the days as they go by. Humans are designed to operate with the idea that life is an ongoing concern. We live with what God promised Noah in Genesis: *“While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease”* (Genesis 8:22).

But as 2024 has now come to a close, the prophet Isaiah reminds us that a different day is coming. He tells us about the day when Christ will *“come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead.”* We could describe this day by saying, “When the Lord comes, everything goes.” Everything that humans covet, fly, drive, sail on, or fight over will be gone. The earth and everything in, on, above, over, or under it—all time, space, matter—gone.

This is not like what happens when you hold a garage sale or clean out your shed. You can get rid of all the stuff you have, but it's not really gone. It's just not in your space anymore. It's either in a dump, in a resale shop, or in someone else's home. It's their stuff now. It's not gone; it's just somewhere else.

But Isaiah describes this day as everything going away. He says, **“The heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, and those who dwell in it will die like gnats.”** Things in our lives wear out, and we replace them—cars, dishwashers, computers, hips, and knees. But this is a day when the earth goes hollow and dry like an old piece of paper. It just falls apart.

On that day of ultimate endings, everything that seems solid in this world will blow away like useless chaff. On that day, we'll find out what "gone" truly means. There's a difference between sky and nothing overhead, between space and nothing, between time and nothing. That day will make that difference plain.

For today, though, we look around, take another breath, drive our cars, and make plans for today and tomorrow. Today, a time of ending seems rather far off and even far-fetched. Being the twenty-first-century, enlightened, educated people that we are, we've come to rely more on ourselves than on the Word of the living God. Instead of lifting our eyes, we lift our telescopes to the heavens. And even in the face of all the wonder and vastness of the universe, we dare to think, "*I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul.*" Astronomy is a beautiful science, but if anything, it shows us just how small and fragile we human beings really are.

The universe is vast beyond our minds as we lift our "**eyes to the heavens.**" As we look to the earth beneath, the wonders never cease. The miracles of rainforests and oceans are still being explored, and we still don't know it all yet. It is all so complex.

Without a doubt, we take the heavens above and the earth below for granted. Maybe human arrogance will even think we're in control of it all or that we can bend it to our will. Instead, we should wonder at the *stability* of God's preservation of all things for us. His hands contain the whole universe, and no nation, no person, and even no hell-bent terrorist group can change that. Nobody with a bomb controls the future. God does. That stability should strengthen us. A little earlier, Isaiah said, "*It is (God) who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in; <sup>23</sup> who brings princes to nothing, and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness*" (40:22-23). God exists far above the world He has created and rules the universe as a powerful monarch above all creation.

And yet, this world is so fragile. How silly we are for forgetting that! God's powerful Word holds together our world and everything in it. All the while, we sin and devise new and inventive ways to break His commandments. We laugh at the idea of holiness: "*What do you mean, no sex outside of marriage? Nobody lives like that anymore. You love that person who happens to be of the same sex as you? Go and get married and live an enjoyable life as husband and husband, or wife and wife – or whatever it is! Come on, you only go around once.*"

God the Father keeps the oceans in place, keeps asteroids from smacking into us, keeps the very breath in our lungs, and we dare Him to call our bluff of unbelief. Isaiah reminds us that we are ripe for the ending of it all.

Our fallen world of sin, death, and shame will meet its end one day. God Himself will come with His justice and righteousness to this sin-beaten world, and we would do well to remember, as the day draws nearer, that what we confess with our mouths and believe in our hearts<sup>1</sup> shall determine our eternity before Him, who judges with perfect righteousness and justice.

God's justice prevails on that final day, not human strength, wisdom, bombs, or bullets. On the Last Day, it is the righteousness of God that will win. The things of this earth may “**vanish like smoke**” or “**wear out like a garment,**” but the Lord goes on to say, “**My salvation will last for ever, and My righteousness will not be frustrated.**”

This is good news beyond belief. Even when the Last Day arrives, God's salvation remains. Even when sky, land, and sea have disappeared, His righteousness will still be here, and it is for you. To get your mind around what God's salvation means, think about this: Imagine everything that has ever gone wrong; God will make it right again. Broken lives salvaged. Addictions beaten. Relationships healed. Sick and broken bodies restored. Violence a thing forgotten. Holy lives abound, all your sins forgiven, and people forever alive.

Sounds good, right? See, the same power that brings the world to its end will bring about a new beginning—a new beginning of remade humanity. That new beginning seeks you out and brings God's salvation to you as a gift. It seeks you out and finds you even when—especially when—you are lost and hurting over your sins.

Jesus has come near to us. He is the Word that holds all things together, and He is the one who has died for you and me. His blood was shed, and His body was broken for sinners; in Him, every sinner has a new beginning. You don't have to fear the justice of God; Jesus has fulfilled it. We no longer have to fear any person, fear that our sins will remain, or even fear the ending of all things. Christ has died, and Christ has risen from the dead; it has all been done for you and for me. God's own righteousness given to you, God's salvation promise sealed in the blood of the Lamb, lasts forever. As we heard in our Gospel before, “*He was named “Jesus”* (Luke 2:21). “Jesus,” literally means “The Lord saves.”

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 10:9

Out of love, joy, and thanksgiving, my prayer for you this New Year's Day is that you would be renewed daily in your baptism. Every day, God's mercy is new. Every day is grace; every breath is a new beginning in the life of faith. Salvation's name is Jesus.

So until the end, we wait in hope for His coming. Jesus reminds us to "*Stay awake*"! (Mark 13:37). Stay awake in your life of faith. Don't let the enemy lull you to sleep. During times of trial, don't lose heart. God does not change, and His salvation is forever. Take to heart those words from the book of Jude, who tells us to build ourselves up in faith. Pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourself in the love of God. Have mercy on those who doubt and show mercy without fear (cf Jude 20-23).

Dear friends, another year has ended, and a new one has begun. Who knows what triumphs or tragedies we'll encounter and endure this year? Some things in our lives will stay, and some things will go. We may enjoy times of stability or endure things that will shake us to our very core. But know this: Our world is passing away, and one day this world will end, but our God's "**salvation will last for ever,**" and His "**righteousness will not be frustrated.**" You have a new beginning every day that will last forever. His name is Jesus Christ, and He is for you. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

## PRAYER FOR NEW YEAR'S DAY

Almighty and ever-living God, You have been our dwelling-place in all generations, and from everlasting to everlasting, You are perfect in wisdom, power, and goodness. We worship You as our creator, protector, and provider, but, above all, for Your wonderful love in sending Your Son into the world to free us from sin for a life of joyous obedience to You.

We praise You, in particular, for the name given to Your holy Child, for it is a sign for all ages that Jesus alone is the source of all redemption and salvation for sinful mankind. We praise You that You have set Him at Your right hand in the heavenly realm, far above all rule, authority, power, and dominion, and above every other name, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. Help us always to hallow the name of Jesus by a living faith in Him, and by obedience to His teaching and example. Help us to trust in His death for us that our hope might be built on His blood and righteousness, and not on any efforts of our own.

We offer our thanks this day for the blessings of the past year and for the way You provided for our many needs. We thank You for family and friends, for home and harvest, for food and clothing, for health of mind and body, for work and leisure, for law and government, for peace and order, for our preservation in the faith, and for those precious hours in which we were able to worship and commune with You. Forgive us where we have sinned. Heal the hurt we have caused others. Forgive us the good we have left undone. Deliver us from the consequence of all our mistakes and transgressions.

Father in heaven, let Your blessing rest on us during the coming year, that we may grow in understanding of Your mercy in Christ, that in sorrow or joy we may know and accept Your loving will, that in prosperity or trial we may experience Your power working in us and know the hope to which You have called us. Give us Your Spirit so that everything we do or say may be done in the name of the Lord Jesus as we give thanks to You, our Father, through Him.

Be the shepherd of our youth, the guardian of all children, the health of the sick, and the support of the aged. Grant that in whatever happens to us we may see Your loving hand and have the sure confidence in Christ that in all things You work for good with those who love You. Be the defender of Your people everywhere. Be the constant guard of our nation. Prosper us in everything that leads to peace and righteousness. Protect us from every evil of body and soul. We ask these things in that one name in which there is salvation, even Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS

5 January 2 Christmas	12 January The Baptism of our Lord	19 January 2 Epiphany
8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA LR 9.00am GRN LR 9.30am AUB LR 9.00am LOWOOD HC	AELC Service 10.00am TMBA HC	8.30am OAK HC 9.00am TMBA LR 9.30am AUB LR 10.15am GRN HC 9.00am MARBURG LR
<b>Sunday, 5 January</b>		
READINGS: 1 Kings 3:4-15;                      Ephesians 1:3-14;                      Luke 2:40-52		
HYMNS: 556 39 588 (181 840) 20		
<b>Sunday, 12 January</b>		
READINGS: Isaiah 43:1-7;                      Romans 6:1-11;                      Luke 3:15-22		
HYMNS: 392 301 279 42 322 791		
<b>Sunday, 19 January</b>		
READINGS: Isaiah 62:1-5;                      1 Corinthians 12:1-11;                      John 2:1-11		
HYMNS: 40 45 47 (84 840) 509		