**Luke 12:35-40 (ESV)**

**35**  “Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning, **36** and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks. **37**  Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them. **38** If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants! **39**  But know this, that if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. **40** You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

**“No Time Like Eternity”**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. Celebrating a New Year has never been a Christian thing. Stepping into 2014 comes from the Gregorian calendar that we all use in our daily lives. January starts another year and Roman culture made it a point to remember. “The month originally owes its name to the deity Janus, who had two faces, one looking forward and the other looking backward.”[[1]](#endnote-1) He was the “god of the gates” standing between the past and the future. I suppose “Father Time” is the more modern version today, since the calendar of the gods has given way to the atomic clock. This is what updates our cell phones, computers, and rises above cultural calendars. Celebrating time reminds us that we are creatures bound to time.   
 There must always be ways to orientate ourselves in the world. We do it with a compass to show which way is north for bearings on a map. When Dorothy was lost in OZ she clicked her heals together three times saying, “There is no place like home.” Orientation is especially true for us all when it comes to time. There are only so many minutes in a day no matter who you are. The seasons of weather run in a cycle telling us what to do and when to do it. Entering into the New Year of 2014 means writing 2013 on checks is no longer valid. Father Time presses on and he waits for no one. Of course, this kind of father has no compassion for those in a sinful world. Christians confess a Father in heaven who sent His one and only son that whoever believes him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

In order to deal with our times, the eternal Savior alone orientates us to His love. He told His disciples, “Stay dressed for action.” There was plenty of activity in 2013 both good and bad. The bad came from sinners and any good came from the God of all grace working in a sinful world. In other words, time eats away at the works of man while God continues to work true salvation for all time. This is what Adam and Eve found out in the garden after the Fall. They were clothed in fig leaves. It showed how foolishness of sinners would not last. God in turn gave animal skins out of love. They were dressed for action that allowed them to work in a sinful world.

The passing away of 2013 shows we need clothes that cannot wear out. Sin, death, and the Devil have worn down our works. Maybe it was at a personal level with problems over work, health, or struggles over sinful habits. Maybe it was trying to make sense of tragedies, facing death of loved ones, or just dealing with the times. Where works wear down, Jesus has clothed us in righteousness worked by His forgiveness, life, and salvation. God has given far more than animal skins, but righteousness that comes by Jesus. Scripture tells us in our time, “But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (Hebrews 9:26). The eternal clothing God gives to wear is baptism into Jesus. To remain dressed in Him is repentance and faith to His love that does not wear out. It leads to action able to serve other as He has served us.

In order to deal with our times, the eternal Lord orientates us to His truth. He told His disciples, “Keep your lamps burning.” 2014 ushers in another year filled with both blessings and fears. Fear from the fact that New Year’s Resolutions never change the heart of sinners. Blessing from the fact that God remains faithful to save. Christ’s Church cries out to the Triune God saying, “Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth” (Psalms 124:8). Matter a fact, this help is what the church celebrates every January 1st by the circumcision of Jesus. Eight days after his birth, the Father cuts His Son with the Law marking what makes our New Year. St. Paul says, “…In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:19).

The starting of 2014 shows we need lamps that continue to burn. We cannot be blind to the times but need the light of God’s Word. It shines with both Law and Gospel. Isaiah shows what time does to the truth of man’s ways saying, “Because you despise this word and trust in oppression and perverseness and rely on them, therefore this iniquity shall be to you like a breach in a high wall…” Jesus explains why a New Year is nothing new to Him as Savior. He says, “And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil” (John 3:19). 2014 needs God to speak His light to the fears created by our false idols, but more importantly to brighten us with the blessings He still gives. Time tells the truth and Jesus came at “just the right time.” His life, death, and resurrection show the Lord of History has concern even for our times. Lamps continue to burn when God’s Word lights the way for us in Jesus.

In order to deal with our times, the past and future meet us at the present. Jesus told His disciples, “be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks.” The times are in the hands of Christ and none other. Yet, these hands come to greet us tonight under bread and wine to receive an eternal Kingdom that stops the clock on the Last Day. Jesus closes out the past with His forgiveness to the repentant and opens up the future with His love for all to trust in Him. This readiness made right by what God gives at the present changes our attitude toward time. Whether bad or good, Christ is the truth and we are ready to confess with St. Paul, “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”

No matter which way the winds blow on this New Year’s Eve, one thing does not change. We need time that rests in eternity. Instead of living by the clock, we look to Christ. Rather than despair over the times, the saints trust in His Word and Sacrament as our comfort. In place of plans for the future, sinners turn with confidence to what He gives to save. The years flash before our eyes, but “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). Taking time to end the year with Him finishes where faith remains in Him. Taking time to begin the year with Him starts where faith comes from Him. The present time is a precious treasure and why every day is to be a Sabbath Day with Jesus. “In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.” Being ready for the times means taking refuge in the love God gives eternally for us in Christ. Amen. Now may the peace God, which surpasses time, but brings eternity, be with you in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.

1. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New\_Year%27s\_Day [↑](#endnote-ref-1)