

**Theme: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever."**

**Ruberto Ek Yah**

*May the mercy, grace and peace of God our Heavenly Father and of our Lord Jesus Christ together with the Holy Spirit be with each one of you. Amen.*

Let us pray:

Dear God, may the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be pleasing to your sight. Help us Lord to focus on You tonight while we say goodbye to this year and welcome a new year. By your Holy Spirit help us to remember that You are the same yesterday, today and forever. Through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord and Savior we pray, Amen.

Once upon a time there was a king who was very troubled. As king, he had many concerns. He cared about doing his job very well, he cared about how to govern well, how to improve the economy, how to keep the peace with his neighboring countries. Have you ever noticed how presidents seem to get older before their time, while they are in charge of the country? The burden of being a leader is heavy, just as this king felt overburdened.

At the same time, the king felt many temptations. He was tempted to abuse his power, to be greedy or stingy, to be corrupt, to be a glutton, to order things so that all his cravings would be fulfilled. Have you ever noticed how honest leaders sometimes even leaders in the church, when they become rich or famous or powerful, sometimes fall into sin? The temptations of a leader are very strong.

The king was so troubled that he gathered all the wise men and philosophers and theologians of his kingdom, and he asked them for help. "Give me some words," said the king, "some words of wisdom that will help me with all the pressures of being king. I need words that will comfort me when things go wrong and that will help me resist temptations when things go well. And keep it short! I don't want a thick book full of hollow words. I just want a few words of wisdom, easy to remember. "

All the wise men of the kingdom got together and argued and finally came up with a short phrase that fit his entire situation. The phrase was so short that it could be engraved on a gold ring so that the king could always wear it on his finger and see it and remember those words. It was four simple words: "This too shall pass."

This is the message of Ecclesiastes 3: there is a time for everything, and everything has its time, and then it is over! "This too shall pass." That's what I want

to focus on today as we start the New Year. First of all, we must remember that all good things will end. For example, for some of us, our health is the most important thing in life. That is why we all take care of ourselves with our masks on and we keep our healthy distance. Because if you don't have health, you have nothing. If we are in good health, we must give thanks to God and we must always take care of our health. However, this too will end. Sooner or later our strength will run out and our health will fail.

Also for many of us, our family is the source of our happiness. What a blessing when there is love and peace in our home! How wonderful it is to spend Christmas together with the family! However, this too will end. Right now we have our children close by but one day they will prepare to go and make their lives or even get married. The family sooner or later disperses. What Ecclesiastes says is true: there is a time to embrace as a family and a time to separate. Everything has its time, and then it ends.

So it is with everything good in life. For example, we can earn money, but then we spend it and it's gone. We may be successful at work, but sooner or later we change jobs or lose our jobs or retire. Young people may have good grades in college or university, but sooner or later they will graduate and leave school behind.

When you think about the past year, remember all the blessings that God gave you. Although we have been in a pandemic for two years, God has given us good things, and we thank him! But at the same time, remember that these blessings are ours only for a time. Everything has its moment, and we enjoy it. But it is very easy to fix our eyes on things that do not last.

Not only the good, but also all the bad things will end too. When you get sick, for example, it seems like the night will never end. You want to sleep, but you can't. Just like when we found out that my wife had cancer. I was just tossing and turning like a rotisserie chicken, and when I looked at the clock, only five minutes had passed. It seems the pain will never end. It seems the night will never end. However, it does end. Ecclesiastes says that there is also a time to heal. Several churches supported my wife and me in the most difficult moments of our lives. Thanks to them, I heard the voice of God telling me "This too shall pass."

I know that you have suffered many things in the past year. However, God says that every problem we have, every affliction, every wound, every anguish will end sooner or later. Ecclesiastes says that there is a time to cry, but also a time to laugh. There is a time to mourn, but also a time to dance. Many of our pains are healed during this life. God sometimes allows us to go through harsh afflictions, but he also gives us times of rest and good. How many times God has helped us in the past year!

But some of our afflictions will not be fully healed in this world. God promises us that the day will come when He will wipe every tear from our eyes, when there will be no more suffering, when death itself will be removed. As you enter this New Year, remember the bad times that you have overcome with God's help. The year 2021 has already ended in this regard. When something hurts us, it seems that the pain will last forever. But this too shall pass!

But we have one thing that will never end! We have Jesus and Jesus has us. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13: 8). For us, the years bring many changes. But for God, a thousand years is like a day, and a day is like a thousand years. Jesus Christ loves us today with the same love that He showed 2,000 years ago. Jesus Christ loves us so much that He was willing to leave heaven behind and be born into this world with all His sufferings and pains and struggles. Jesus Christ loves us so much that He was willing to die a horrible death on the cross to erase our moral failings and sins. Jesus Christ loves us so much that, just as He rose from the dead, so He will also raise us to live forever with Him.

Christ tells us, "I will never leave you or forsake you." (Hebrews 13: 5) Jesus says "I will be with you always, until the end of the world." (Matthew 28:20) It is true, as Ecclesiastes says, "There is a time to be born and a time to die." But it is also true, as Romans 8 says, that "neither death nor life, neither angels nor spiritual powers and forces, neither the present (2021) nor the future (2022), neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love that God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8: 38-39) No matter what happens to us in this life, Jesus Christ loves us. If we are alive, we know that Christ is by our side through good times and bad times. If we were to die, then we will be with Christ to await the day of resurrection. We all go through good times and bad times. There is a time for everything. But the love of Christ lasts forever.

Sadly, we often forget this simple truth. Our hearts are almost always far from God, lost and tangled in the past and future, preoccupied with good things and bad things that don't last. That is why sometimes we stumble and do or say or think things that are not in accordance with the love of God. We stop looking at the constant love of God and fix our eyes on passing things. In the year 2021, our love failed many times. But as we enter the New Year, we return to God whose love never fails. Jesus Christ forgives us. Our past sins are over! Because the love of Christ never ends.

Well, everything that happened in our-lives last year, good or bad, is over. The year 2021 has already gone down in history. In the next year, in 2022, if life gets harder, busier, with too much to do, remember: "this too shall pass." If all is going well for you and you are tempted to take your blessings for granted or to trust your money or your strength or your family or anything other than God, remember, "this too shall pass." If you have to go through hard times of pain or trouble, remember:

"this too shall pass." Everything will end. But Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. In the New Year, let us leave our failures at the feet of Jesus who never fails, for He will forgive us. In the New Year, let us leave our afflictions at the feet of Jesus who suffered and died for us. Jesus Christ will always be with us. Because his love will never end. Amen.

May the Peace of God that surpasses all understanding guard and care for his hearts in Christ Jesus. Amen.