

Pressing Forward

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Preacher: Wee Hian Chua

[0 : 00] Hello everybody, my name is Chris, I'm a member of Watermark Church and we're going to read the Nicene Creed together. Now, it should be on the screen. Now this creed is 1,700 years old and the earliest Christians were facing a situation where many people were saying lots of different things about God.

And they wanted to come together and make a statement to say this is what we believe is the essential part of the Christian faith. This is what we hold on to. This is what really matters and really counts for us.

And over the last 1,700 years, people have even died for many of these things that we're going to say here. So I'm going to read this. Let's read together.

And as we read, let this not just be words that we say, but this is the truth. This is the heart of the Christian message. So let's read this together.

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen.

[1 : 10] We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father.

Through him all things were made for us and for our salvation. He came down from heaven by the power of the Holy Spirit.

He became incarnate from the Virgin Mary and was made man. For our sake, he was crucified under Pontius Pilate.

He suffered death and was buried. On the third day, he rose again in accordance with the scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son.

[2 : 22] With the Father and the Son, he is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy, universal, and apostolic church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Amen. Okay, I'm just going to pray for us for the new year and for all that God has been doing and is going to do.

I'm going to pray for our leaders and pray for the leaders of Hong Kong as well. So would you bow your heads with me and let's pray to our great Father. Father, we thank you so much that you are an amazing God.

Thank you so much for the way that you have brought us through another year. Thank you for this new year. Thank you for all that you have been doing in Watermark over this last year, Lord.

[3 : 21] We praise you for the way that you have brought so many people here to us, the way that we've been able to reach out to the community. Thank you for all the events that happened over Christmas and for the people who have come to hear of your good news over this time.

We pray, Lord, that you would just be touching hearts in this city and touching our hearts as well, Father. We pray that this new year would not just be another year, but it would be a year where we come to love you, to know you, and to grow more like you, Lord Jesus.

And we pray, Father, for our leaders. Lord, we thank you particularly for Tobin and his family. Lord, we pray for them and for the TOB as well. Lord, we pray, Lord, that you would give them wisdom.

We pray that you would just guide them in decisions, help them to lead well, help them to love you and to help us to love you more. And we pray, Father, that you would help us as well to follow and

to be obedient and to really love you as well more and more through following their example. And, Father, we also want to pray into Hong Kong. Lord, we thank you for this city, for this great city that you have made and you have brought people from many nations together.

[4 : 41] We pray, Lord, that in this city people would come to know you, that this new year, Lord, would be a year of salvation for many people, where they're set free from the slavery of just having to live for money and having to live for things which won't last.

We pray that your church across this city would make a difference. And we pray for the leaders. We pray for the new chief executive when he comes in, Lord, that he would be a man of justice, a man who has compassion on people and does not look just to his own interests, but to the good of all people.

And we pray all these things in your amazing, great name. Amen. My name is Jason. We're so glad you're here. I want to welcome you, along with Chris, along with Jeremy, along with Pastor Tobin, here to Watermark.

Pastor Twa will come up in a second to speak to us, to share God's word with us. But first, I'm going to take you through the scripture reading, which is found from Philipians and Isaiah.

I think it's found in your bulletin. But first off, that song is powerful. It kind of gets me choked up. I don't...

[5 : 56] I don't... I don't know where your joy is. But I work in finance.

And I can tell you, for a lot of my colleagues, for a lot of business people in the city, this 2011 was not a lot of joy. And I think it's my hope for you that in this year, that you come to know a joy that surpasses understanding, that won't let you down, that won't jump around like the stock market. And the good news is that that joy can be yours. So sorry for crying, but why don't we do the scripture? Sure. Okay.

This is the Apostle Paul writing to the Philipians from jail. It's from Philipians 3. Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord.

It's no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it's a safeguard for you. Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh, though I myself have reasons for such confidence.

[7 : 37] If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more.

Circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel, the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, in regard to the law, a Pharisee, as for zeal, persecuting the church, as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.

But whatever was to my profit, I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things.

I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so somehow to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I've already obtained all this or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I don't consider myself yet to have taken hold of it, but one thing I do, forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus.

[9 : 11] And the second passage is from Isaiah, chapter 45. This is initially God speaking. I am the Lord, your Holy One, Israel's Creator and your King. This is what the Lord says, He who made a way through the sea, it's going back to Exodus, He who made a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters, who drew out the chariots and horses, the army and reinforcements together, and they lay there, never to rise again, extinguished, snuffed out like a wick.

Forget the former things, don't dwell on the past. See, I'm doing a new thing. Now it springs up, do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.

This is God's Word. Happy New Year. Happy New Year. Those of you who stayed up till midnight and beyond might be reminded of the words of a journalist called Bill Vaughn.

He said, Optimists, stay till midnight to see the New Year in. Pessimists, stay till midnight to make sure the old year leaves.

Throughout the world, the New Year begins on the 1st of January, and the month January is named after a Roman God, the Roman God Janus.

[10:35] He is a two-headed God. One head looks back to the past, the past months, and the other looks forward to the New Year.

I don't know how you're feeling this morning. Are you looking back at 201 with joy, with relief, or with regret? Or are you looking like what Bruce Springsteen would call the old glory days?

Or are you looking forward to a new day, to a new year, where much awaits us? But in the Roman picture of Janus, there's always a struggle. One wants to look ahead, and the other wants to look backward.

There is that eternal tension, as it were. But today, as we gather here, we want to ask ourselves a question. What is God's Word for us this year? And I'd like us to turn to the passage that was read for us, to Philippians chapter 3.

And God's Word for us for this year is this. In Philippians 3, verse 13, we read the words of the Apostle. Paul was using the imagery of a race.

[11:58] And to be a winner, to be a champion, you have to have a very distinct ambition. His ambition was to be a gold medalist. In his day, it was the crown of a laurel wreath.

But for us today, in the Olympics, and this is Olympics year, it is a gold medal. And the Apostle Paul is saying, I want to win that medal. That is my ambition. That is my goal.

One thing I do. There's a sense of priority and passion. And to do this, the Apostle Paul tells us, we have to do the following things. We have to forget what is behind.

We have to strain forwards to what is ahead. And this is the language of an athlete who sees the finishing line, who sees the tape, and he just goes forward to be the first to reach that particular goal and marker.

And then also, to look at the prize. The prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus. There's a prize to be won and to be awarded.

[13:02] And God is going to give those who complete that race that glorious prize. But now let's look at four things that we need to learn this morning. The first is forgetting.

Forgetting, says Paul, the things that are behind. Our minds hold powerful memory banks. We have a sense of history.

We remember, we recollect things that happened to us in past weeks, months, and even years.

How can we forget? What do we forget? And we might even ask ourselves, is it right to forget?

Because this morning, as we celebrated communion, we are to remember, to remember the Lord.

Then when you read the Old Testament, you find that time and time again, we are told not to forget the mighty things that God has done, but always to remember.

And if you look at Deuteronomy, for example, there God was saying, remember you were once slaves, remember how I parted the waters of the Red Sea, remember how I brought you to the Promised Land, remember, remember, don't forget.

[14:14] But here, the Apostle Paul was not talking about the great things that God has done. Of course, as Christians, we want to look back and see the mighty actions of God and say, Hallelujah!

We praise God, the Lord has done great things for us, and we rejoice, we are glad we should do that. But there are some things that has to be forgotten. What are these things?

For the Apostle Paul, it was his past life. Before he met Jesus, or in the words of Philippians 3, before Jesus took hold of him, apprehended him, grasped him, before that marvellous experience, that total change of direction, Paul was banking on a lot of things of the past.

And in Philippians 3, from the metaphor of a race, he now employs the metaphor of the accountancy world. He looks at life's ledger, and he begins to see things very differently once he had met the living Jesus Christ.

Paul, as some of us know, was a Pharisee, a man who was very religious, a leader, and he was even persecuting the church. Why?

[15:25] Because in his old spiritual perspective, he was putting confidence in the flesh. Verse 3. That was Paul's way of living. Life in the flesh.

The do-it-yourself religion. And then he begins to look at his old life, and he begins to see what he thought were assets, what were gains, what were profit.

And so in this ledger, in this accountancy spreadsheet, he says, in the past, I gloried in my ancestry, my racial roots, and also my religious background, circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews.

I'm not a mixed-up kid. I'm 100% pure, a Hebrew of Hebrews. As to the law, a Pharisee. As for zeal, persecuting the church, as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.

Wow. Here was a man who knew the law, the Jewish law, the Torah, and realized that there were 365 prohibitions, and 248 commands.

[16:38] He kept all these things. As to the law, righteous. And he gloried in it. And he competed in this race of the law, with many, many other Jewish believers. And he was streets ahead, of many of his competitors, and rivals.

He thought, I made it. And then one day, when he met Jesus, everything changed. There was a great turnaround, a mighty reversal.

What was profit, became loss. What was so wonderful, the assets, became liabilities, and debts. And Paul was saying, when Jesus found me, or when I committed my life to him, when I really connected with him, I saw life quite differently.

Once upon a time, it was do, do, do. And in my flesh, I tried to attempt everything I can, for God. And I was so religious. You cannot fault me, for my sincerity, and for my religiosity.

And yet, Paul realized, that all these things, were in the wrong direction, it was totally worthless. And once he knew Jesus Christ, he says, I found it, incomparable, knowing this Jesus.

[17:56] He's all in all to me. He's the pearl, of great price. And everything else, my past heritage, my legal righteousness, I count them as loss.

He used even a stronger word, a word which I will not repeat to you, in the original. It's an S word. It's like filth, excrement. It's horrid, when he thinks of the wonder, of knowing Jesus, and all these things pale, into insignificance.

So, Paul is trying to say, once upon a time, I competed, in the wrong race. I was in the wrong arena, the wrong stadium.

It was the race, which I thought, could gain me, righteousness, through God. I could get a prize, the reward from him. It was all wrong, completely a mess.

Because when I find Christ, there is a new sense, of salvation, of understanding, how God deals with me. It's not me attempting, to get him, to find him, but in Jesus Christ, God has done, everything for me.

[19:04] Many years ago, there was a religious conference, in England, and this was in Oxford, in the university, and different leaders, of various religions, were proposing, and propounding, their way, their philosophy, and their tenets of faith.

And they were trying, to work out. And somebody asked, the Christian delegation, what is distinctive? What's so special, about your religion? That's not the same, amongst the other, great world religions.

And they couldn't, give an answer. And C.S. Lewis, was just passing by. When he heard, that question being asked, he said simple. And he says, just one word. The big difference, is the word grace.

It is God, accepting us, and as Pastor Tobin, reminds us, not because, we are good enough, because we are terrible, we are bad, we will never be able, to gain, God's commendation, and approval.

But God in Christ, did something. He died on the cross, to take away, our sins. And, Paul says, when I found that, and I have a righteousness now, which is not my own, doing, but which is true faith, in Jesus Christ, I become, totally, a new man.

[20:17] I find myself, having to leave, the old race, the old arena, and now, moving on, to a fresh, brand new track, and the race, of life.

My value, has changed. I want to forget, the past, the past, ways of trying, to get right, with God. And I'm going to move, forward, and I will not, allow anything, to hinder, me.

What about, us Christians? Like Paul, we have to do the same. Even if you're not, a Christian today, maybe you find yourself, running in the wrong race, of life. You might be taking part, in all kinds, of competitions, to win cups, and medals, and shields, and so on.

But those things, don't matter. Because, unless, you are in Christ Jesus, and have gained, the approval, the blessing of God, and being made right, with Him, you will not be able, to run the

grace, the race, that God intends you, to run.

Sometimes, for some of us, we might find, as we step, into a new year, we might make, all kinds of resolution, and someone has said, passing resolution, is like going, through one year, to another, and we can't keep it.

[21 : 29] By the way, how many pounds, have you lost, since you made, the resolution? And how hard, have you worked, and how much exercise, have you done? And all the things, that you promised, you would do.

See, it's not based, on new year resolutions. It's much, much more, than that. We have to forget, things that kind of, pull us back, hold us back, from striving, ahead, to know God, His will, His intention, and purpose for us.

For some of us, we can live, with past failures, and regrets. We say, oh dear, how I wish, I didn't do that, I did not make that decision, or said those words. We are ruining, all the things, that we have missed, and we live, a life of regret.

And our memory, ties us back, to our old history, a history, of repeated failure, that relationship, was broken, that decision, led me not upwards, but downwards.

And I become so depressed, and we begin to think, oh dear, history, always repeats itself. Am I doomed, to go that way? And Paul says, no, you forget those things, you leave them all behind.

[22 : 41] If you want to press forward, press on, in the race of life, then you have, to forget. All values, have to go. Knowing Christ, leads us, to a brand new way, of living, and thinking.

So God is saying to us, forget all your failures, all your drawbacks, all the things, that people have said, you can't do. God is saying, this is a new day.

Then secondly, in our text, there's also pressing on, or forward pressing. Paul says, I strain towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal, the win, the price of which God, has given to me, in Christ Jesus.

He was always pressing on, always looking ahead. As for Christians, we don't want just to look around, or to look downwards. I once heard, a trapeze artist, saying that the secret, of walking across, a tightrope, is to look at, the finishing post, or the object, the place, the other side, that you have to cross.

So if you are trying to walk, through, walk on a thin rope, or wire, if you start looking down, from where you are standing, you will fall. You look down, you get so frightened, and you simply fall.

[24 : 05] But when the expert, the trapeze, the tightrope walker, just goes straight, looking at his goal, I'm going to walk there, walk there, till I get across, then he's able, to achieve his goal.

So Paul is saying, we have to press forward, to look at the marker, to look at the goal itself. If we look downward, or around us, we're like Peter. Remember Peter, when he saw Jesus, walking on water, Jesus said, okay, if you want to join me, jump out.

So Peter, jumped out, he had hope, that he could stay afloat, and walk on water. He had faith, as he looked at Jesus. And then, when he looked at the waves, what happened?

Fear came in, and he sank. In the same way too, if we want to walk, the way that God wants us to walk, is not just looking at people around us, or downwards, with all our fear, and our phobia, but to look at him, the author, and finisher, of our faith.

So we want to face the future, looking forward. We want to keep on running straight, and never, as it were, to look back. In May, 1974, in May, 1954, the, one mile record was broken, by Roger Bannister.

[25 : 32] He was then a medical student. At that time, nobody ran the mile, for under four minutes. And Roger Bannister, was the first one, to cross that line. And by the way, we met him, saw him, when he was master, of Pembroke College, in Oxford.

Some years after, he had accomplished that, so we had met him personally, name dropping again. And, Roger Bannister, was hailed, as a hero, because he broke, the four minute mile, record.

But within two weeks, an Australian athlete, by the name of John Landy, clipped the record, by 1.4 seconds. And since then, many people have, ran the mile, under four minutes.

But in August, 1954, there was, billed as the greatest race, on earth then. It was the race, between Roger Bannister, and John Landy. So as they were running, as they were going back, towards the home stretch, Landy, was a few yards ahead.

And when he was, a few yards ahead, he couldn't find his rival, anywhere near him, and he began to say, where is John? Where is Landy? And he began to look back. And when he looked back,

Roger Bannister, streaked past him.

[26 : 44] You want to be a gold medalist, you don't look back. You look forward, until you have crossed the line, and complete, that race. When you have pressed, the tape, then you are the winner. So, there's always a pressing on, forgetting, pressing on, or pressing forward.

And then, there's also a finishing. Now, many people think, that the Christian life, is like a sprint, a hundred meter dash, or a two hundred meter race.

No. The Christian life, the race of life, is a marathon. It's a long haul. It takes distance. It requires training, and discipline.

And I'm reminded, of the words, of one of China's, greatest pastors, Wang Mingtao. And Wang Mingtao, once said, many have good beginnings, but few have good endings.

Many have good beginnings. And we see, that in the church, once upon a time, there were many people, who trusted Jesus, same time as I was. And they were outstanding, they were brilliant, and they had so much potential, and so much gifts.

[27 : 52] But then they fell. They fell. They never made it. So many Christians, may have good beginnings, and Wang Mingtao warns us, few have good endings.

I want to have good beginning, I want to have a good ending, and I also want to have a good continuing. Say amen to that? Amen. We want to do that, don't we? We want to run, the race of life that way.

But you know, sometimes, because of indiscipline, because of just one failure, everything can go wrong. Now, some of you know, that I love to watch soccer.

And I like to imagine myself, as the coach, and so on. And many of us, might remember, a final, in 2006, World Cup final, between France, and Italy.

And what happened? Extra time, the captain of the French team, Zindani, Zindani, what happened to him? Because, Materazzi, the Italian soccer player, said something not very pleasant, he headbutted him.

[28 : 56] Now, Zindani was the world's top player, in his day. It took him 15 years, to be the world's best soccer player, the captain of the French team. And one, action like that, resulted in, he's getting the red card.

He was sent off. And it became infamous. And, many people remember, the 2006, World Cup final, as the day, when the captain of France, was sent off.

Isn't that, a parable? For many of us, we might begin very well, keen Christians, you know, we can join the choir, we can take part in this or that, and we even serve as deacons, and elders.

But, one, action, where we deny, our integrity, our faith, what God, stands for, could lead us, into, great, disaster.

So, here, is a, a great, great challenge for us. We must learn, to finish well. Many people, have good beginnings, few have good endings. I'm reminded, too, of, someone, whom I respect greatly, Billy Graham.

[30 : 09] He's a man, of, outstanding character, and he, has done so many things, for God's kingdom. When Billy, came into the forefront, of his ministry, there were two other men.

In fact, they were more brilliant, than him. They were more able, than him. One of them, was called Charles Templeton. He became, a reporter, and, he did a great job, and was promoted.

He became, a multi-millionaire, and so on. But, he began to compromise, with his faith. Then, there was another man, who was also, a contemporary of Billy, because three of them, were working together, in Youth for Christ, a wonderful, organization, for young people.

And this third man, he rose to fame, he was preaching, even more powerfully, more ably, than Billy Graham, himself. And then, he began to compromise, with the world.

He fell into sin, and before long, his marriage was broken up, and he died, a pauper, he died, a miserable wreck. So, these three men, they began well.

[31 : 15] Only one, has continued, and, is glorifying God. The Apostle Paul, when he, was writing towards, the end of his life, in his letter to Timothy, 2 Timothy chapter 4, he said these words, I, have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith, now there is in store for me, the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me, on that day, and not only to me, but also to all, who have longed, for his appearing.

I, have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, until, we cross the finishing line. There is no assurance, that we can make it, completely. Therefore, we need, God's grace, especially, when we

want, to finish.

And how do we finish, that race well? The author, of the epistle to Hebrews, tells us, only when we look, look to Jesus, looking to Jesus, the author, and the finisher, of our race.

But then, I want to move on, by asking ourselves, another question. What do we focus on? How can we run, the race of life, and be the winner? How can we make, our life count?

Especially, as we stand today, on the 1st of January, 2011. How are we going to make it, successfully, to the very end? And I believe, the key is found, in our text, in our passage, that we have read, this morning.

[32 : 50] Philippians, chapter 3, verse 10. Here was Paul's goal. Here was his ambition. I want to know, Christ. To know him personally, not, to know about, him.

I live in England, Buckingham Palace, is just over a mile, from where I live. I read and seen, many pictures, portraits of the queen, but I've never met her. I do not know, know her personally.

I know about her. But here, Christ says, I want to know, to know intimately, Christ, enter into, a personal, intimate relationship, with him.

And the power, of his resurrection, and the fellowship, of sharing, in his suffering. So we need, to learn, how to focus. Focusing, is vital.

If we want to complete, the race of life, knowing Jesus. So the question, is this, how are we going, to win, the race of life?

[33 : 49] How are we going, to make a difference, as we, live, this year, the year, 2012? How are we going, to have, a successful, completion, and ending, to this year?

And the answer, is really, by knowing Jesus, knowing him, intimately, knowing him, more and more. And to know Jesus, to know Jesus, spells, T-I-M-E, time.

You can't say, I want to be like Jesus, I want to mature, in my Christian faith, and we wave, a kind of magic wand, and hey presto, we get there. No. we have to learn, to walk with him, and to run with him, and to know him, daily, more and more.

There is, in a sense, a desire, to grow close to him, through daily discipline. So, if we want, to finish well, we have to be, focusing, on our relationship, with Jesus Christ.

It's only, when we know him, and enjoy his friendship, that we are able, to grow, and also, that his friendship, would touch, and change us, completely.

[35 : 04] So, it's very important, that we understand, and know change. Now, once there was, an Irish man, called Paddy, most Irish people, are called Paddy, and he was a drunk, and he did all kinds, of terrible things, and whenever he went home, he would kick, the front door down, and his children, his wife, would be, terribly afraid of him, terrified of him.

And one night, in the pub, he was marvelously, converted. Jesus, got hold, of him. And then, things began to change. When he went home, that night, instead of, kicking down the door, as he normally did, he started to knock.

And then, when they opened the door, when he got in, the dog beat him, because it didn't recognize him. And when Paddy got in the door, things happened so much, because God, in a wonderful way, has touched, and changed him.

And his life, was turned around, completely. Paddy, had met Jesus. Paddy, had gone, to know Jesus, and he knew Jesus, not only in his person, but also, the power, of his resurrection.

He's going to turn his back, against drink, against violence, to his wife, and family. He was a new man, all together. And then, we need to understand, and know, that this is the, the great power of God, to touch, to transform life.

[36 : 33] And it comes through, knowing him, loving him, and experiencing the power, of his resurrection. And also, to know something too, of his suffering. Because not all, all life, is sunshine.

There are going to be storms, there are going to be, dark clouds, there are going to be, testings, and trials. But it's only, to trials, that our character, godly character, emerges.

Someone has said, only crushed spices, smell nice. And sometimes, when we keep, our spice to ourselves, and do not allow God, to break us, to not enter, into his suffering, into his passion, we may not exude, the fragrance, of Jesus, in our lives.

But when, spice is crushed, a fragrance, is exuded. And the other thing, I want to call your attention to, is that, chapter, or part of the chapter, that was read to us, in our reading this morning, from Isaiah, chapter, 43.

It is a lovely, lovely chapter, Isaiah, chapter 43. And here, is a message, for our new year. There the prophet says, forget the former things, do not dwell, on the past, see, I am doing, a new thing.

[37 : 50] Now it springs up, do you not perceive, I am making a way, in the desert, and streams, in the wasteland. God, is in the business, of the new.

He is going to do, a new thing. Some of us, might be crushed, as we look at the past. We rule, and regret, all our failures, all our dreams, that were not fulfilled, all the brokenness, that happened to us, in the past year.

But God is saying to us, don't rule, don't regret, the past year. Look forward, to the new year. Look forward, to me. I am the God, who makes, all things, new.

And he is the God, who is going to do, a new thing. And we do not want, to stick, as it were, with our old tradition. We do not want to, chant as the Anklans do, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, or without end.

Because our God, is a God, of new beginnings. Our God, is a God, of freshness. Our God, is a God, who leads us, to new, and exciting things, as we walk with him.

[38 : 55] Because in, the book of Lamentation, we are told, God's love, God's compassion, they are, new, new, every morning.

When Jesus came, he was looking, he says, for new wine, in new wineskin. And his new wine, cannot be contained, in all wineskins, of tradition, and the past.

God is saying to us, look, for the new. And someone, has said, that as you look, towards the end times, when Jesus comes again, in glory, the same theme, is repeated, I will make, all things, new.

We are now, living in the age, of the Holy Spirit. And I think, of the words, of Marcel Proust, who said these words, the role, the real, voyage, of discovery, consists, not in seeking, new landscapes, but in having, new eyes.

Not seeking, new landscapes, but having, new eyes. And I want to pray, that God will give us, fresh vision, new eyes, to see, what he is doing, in our world today, and also, in the future.

[40 : 05] So what is God's word, for us this morning, as we begin, a new year? It is, to forget, the things that have, bogged us down, the things that have, prevented us, from making, our advances, morally, spiritually, and, life's goals, and so on, to forget those things, but to press on, in the race, of life.

And when we, go forward, we don't look back, with regret, at past misdeeds, at past sins, we bring them to God, for forgiveness, for clearance, and then we want to, aim well, we want to, end well. We want to look forward, to make sure, that our time, this year, are times that we will, spend with God. Some of us, especially as we live, in Hong Kong, we are renowned, for business, we have no time, so we save for anything, that's not quite true, because, every one of us, can make time, make time, for that, which is precious.

If you are courting, supposing you love somebody, very dearly, what happens? You make every excuse possible, just to see her, right? Or just to see him. You may have no time, but you learn, to make time, so too with God.

As we go, through 2012, we want to have, time with God, we want to say, God, I want you to have, prior place, in my life, prior claims, on my life.

[41 : 31] And, in the words of, T.S. Eliot, he says, for last year's words, belong to last year's language, and next year's words, await another voice. And to make an end, is to make, a new beginning.

To make an end, is to make, a new, beginning. And Paul says, look, I want to forget, all those things, that are behind us. I want to press, towards the mark, for the high calling of God, in Jesus Christ.

I want to run, this race, of life. I want to aim, to please God. And, I want to see, great things, happening to me. And God is saying, to every one of us today, forget former things, the things that have, bogged you, have let you down, and so on.

This is a new day. This is a new year. And God is saying to me, run the race of life, with me.

Looking to Jesus, author, and finish of your faith. Finish well, and I will be with you.

I will strengthen you. I remember, when the great architect, Frank Lloyd Wright, was asked a question, what is the greatest building, that you've ever built?

[42 : 42] And his reply was, the next one. And may this be our passion as well. What's the greatest thing, that we're going to do? The next one.

That means, you and I, in the meantime, want to spend, the best of time, with our God, and say, God, this is a new year. Thank you for giving it to me. I want to raise that right, the race, in this race of life, and I want to finish well.

Will you give me the strength? Will you run with me? Run with me, so that I can, press the tape, and finish, and to hear, you're well done. You're well done, good, and faithful servant.

Let's pray together. Lord, we thank you so much, for your word, we pray like the Apostle Paul, we may not just dwell on past things, whether they be of shame, even of achievements, that we may look forward to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, and of our race.

We thank you for the gift of this new year, and we pray that by your spirit, you will enable us to run this race, and to finish well. And also, Lord, as we run, that we will not run alone, that we will be encouraging one another, to travel life with you, to run this race with us, so that at the end, we will receive your crown of glory, to hear your well done, good, and faithful servant.

[44 : 19] we pray and ask all these things, in Jesus' name. Amen.