

To Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, forever and ever. Amen.

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

Text: Hebrews 13:8 A 1/1/17 Deuteronomy 31:1-8 Luke 2:21-32 Psalm 72 (Resp. Ps. fr. 90)  
Hymns: 98, 123, 120, 644

### **WE CAN ALWAYS DEPEND ON JESUS**

Help us, O Lord! Behold, we enter  
Upon another year today;  
In Thee our hopes and thoughts now center,  
Renew our courage for the way.  
New life, new strength, new happiness,  
We ask of Thee, – oh, hear and bless! (TLH #120:1)

Dear fellow believers in Christ,

Some years ago I went to see an old school I had gone to, only to find that it had been closed, and was falling apart. The next time I went by there it had been torn down, and houses now stand where my old school had been. Someone I grew up with was a nice guy, but he changed and was no longer the person he used to be. Dear family members and friends pass away, and we sure miss them. Sometimes we can't or don't keep a promise we made to someone. So many things in life change, or can't always be depended on. On this New Year's Day we're reminded of the One on whom we can always depend, the One in whom we can place complete trust: "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*"

Jesus once said, "*Before Abraham was, I AM*" (Jn. 8:58). Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God who has **always** existed. John says that the Son of God "*was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him*" (Jn. 1:2-3). Together with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, the Son of God helped create everything. Colossians 1:17 says about Jesus, "*In Him all things hold together*" (ESV). As the eternal, almighty God Jesus is holding the whole universe together! We say with the psalmist, "*Our help is in the name of the LORD, Who made heaven and earth*" (Ps. 124:8). He who holds the universe together is holding our lives together. Most of us have gone through difficult times in the past when we stumbled and struggled. We were able to make it through those times because the eternal, almighty Son of God was with us and helped us and gave us the strength we needed.

John says, *“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth”* (Jn. 1:14). The Son of God was conceived and born of the virgin, Mary and also became human. What an **astounding** miracle that the One who helped create everything and is holding it all together was at the same time Mary’s tiny, newborn baby! The Bible says that *“being found in appearance as a man, [Christ] humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross”* (Philip. 2:8). In love, the Son of God came down to earth from heaven. He was born in a cattle barn and laid in a feeding trough for His bed. He later gave His life on the cross to save us all from our sins.

The Bible says about the children of Israel traveling through the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land, the *“Rock that followed them ... was Christ”* (1 Cor. 10:4). Jesus delivered His helpless people through the Red Sea. Jesus protected them and provided for them in the desert. Jesus safely brought them into the Promised Land, helping them defeat the heathen nations there and giving them *“a good land ... flowing with milk and honey”* (Ex. 30:8). Later at different times when many of His people turned their backs on Him He brought judgments on their nation. But when they repented He forgave them and restored and strengthened them. Best of all, just as God had promised, Jesus came as their Savior and the Savior of the world: *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”* (Jn. 3:16).

Scripture says, *“He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”* (Ro. 8:32). Because God was willing to give us Jesus He certainly also protects us and provides for us and takes care of all of our other needs. David said, *“I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread”* (Ps. 37:25). Jesus has **never** failed us in the past. *“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday....”*

*“Jesus Christ is the same ... today.”* Jesus is still with us. That’s why we’re here this morning. Jesus put that desire into our hearts. We want to and need to worship Him and pray to Him and hear His Word. As we begin the new year we look to Jesus to continue to be with us and guide us and bless us. Our great comfort for each day of the new year is Jesus’ promise, *“I am with you always”* (Mt. 28:20). Our daily assurance is that *“God is our refuge and strength, an **ever present** help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling. **The LORD of hosts is with us**; the God of Jacob is our refuge. ...the LORD ... makes wars cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariot in the fire. **Be still, and know that I am God**; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth! **The LORD of hosts is with us**; the God of Jacob is our refuge”* (from Ps. 46). *“Jesus Christ is the same ... today.”*

*“Jesus Christ is the same ... forever.”* As Jesus has always been in the past, as He always is now, so will He always be. *“And the LORD, He is the one who goes before you”* (the One who knows and controls the future is leading us). *“He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed”* – Deuteronomy 31:8. *“The **LORD** is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. **He restores my soul**; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for **His** name’s sake.”* (Jesus will continue to lead us on the narrow path to heaven *“for **His** name’s sake”* – not because we’re so strong, but because **Jesus** is so strong). *“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies”* (Jesus is with us to bless us even in the face of our troubles). *You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over”* (overflowing with blessings from Jesus). *“Surely **goodness and mercy** shall follow me **all** the days of my life; and **I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever**”* (Ps. 23). Jesus promises us, *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand”* (Jn. 10:27-28). As we keep looking to Jesus, He will never let us go. **He** will take us to heaven. *“Let not your heart be troubled”* Jesus tells us, *“you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also”* (Jn. 14:1-3).

On this New Year’s Day as we look back on our life, at where we are now, and ahead to the future there is One on whom we can always depend, who never changes: Jesus. Jesus Christ, the almighty, eternal Son of God who helped create everything and is holding everything together is holding us and our life together. Jesus died on the cross and rose again, taking all of our sins away. Jesus is with us each day, keeping us as His believing people and leading us to our home in heaven. So many things in life change, or can’t always be depended on. *“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”*

Our God, our Help in ages past,  
 Our Hope for years to come,  
 Be Thou our Guard while troubles last  
 And our eternal Home! Amen. (TLH #123:8)