

Title: NEW YEAR, RENEWED LIFE, ECCLESIASTES 3:1-13  
(Chatham, NJ; 01/04/15, AM) [Pc – Topical]

Theme: The beginning of another year can bring about some reflection on our faith as well as a renewed commitment to serving God.

Purpose: To help us reflect on the new year, the passing of time, and how we continue to be faithful to God's plan.

Introduction:

1. Have you made some New Year's resolutions yet?
2. How about some goals?
3. Or have you just paused to reflect on life and what the new year might bring?
4. Psalm 90:12 urges us to "number our days," that is, to consider that with each passing year we know this life will end.
5. Without making any rash resolutions, today let's just consider a few things about our lives that will help guide our thoughts and actions throughout the year.

## I. Reflect on the Seasons of Life

### A. Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

1. First, there are some things humans can know about life by observation and experience.
2. Experiences over a lifetime include a wide variety of opposing things, 2-8
3. This presents a cyclical view of life that affects all humanity.
4. We cannot control these seasons: our freedom is limited to some degree
5. We can control how we respond to them: this is the freedom God gives us.

### B. Verses 9-13

1. Second, there are things we can't know about life: man can't know what God has done at the beginning nor will do at the end, 11
2. Yet there is a beauty in life that we can strive to see
3. There is also eternity in our hearts that drives our aspirations
4. Despite limitations to our sight and freedom, God has given gifts to enjoy, 13

### C. Our lives can be fulfilling

1. Don't strive for exceptional living – don't need to be the next American Idol
2. Strive for faithful living
3. What the world considers ordinary is probably the exceptional in God's eyes
4. You'll hear me talk about this from time to time this year

## II. Strive to Discern the Hand of God

### A. Psalm 147

1. God's sovereignty is highlighted along with his redemptive activity
2. Healing for his people, 2-3, 6
3. His power extends over the span of the universe, 4
4. Numerous verses reflect his provisions for food and his control of nature
5. He has revealed himself to his people, 19

### B. Psalm 8

1. His majesty and splendor are extolled, even by little children
2. When the psalmist questions the role of man in contrast to the majesty of God, he realizes that God has elevated him
3. Jesus represents the highest achievement of humanity, Hebrews 2:5-9
4. By his grace mankind can be redeemed to be what he was meant to be

C. Jeremiah 31:7-14

1. The prophet gives Israel (and us) the hope of redemption: to return home
2. The hand of God marks out the way that we can go home (our citizenship is in heaven, Phil. 3:19)
3. Discerning the way home to God provides hope for any age

III. Keep Eternity in Mind, Ecc. 3:11

A. Ephesians 1:1-14

1. God had a plan from the foundation of the world, 4
2. He determined to bring about a union of heaven and earth through Christ, 10
3. Our inheritance awaits, 14

B. We have experienced the fullness of time, Ephesians 1:10 & Gal. 4:4

1. This is the fulfillment of prophecy
2. The plan of redemption has been completed
3. This is the closing of one epoch and the opening of another
4. We are living in and have experienced this momentous time
5. Ecclesiastes does not and cannot account for this; only in this new age can we experience the hope of eternity that is in the hearts of humanity

C. Remember Jesus on the throne, Revelation 21:1-6

1. All things are being made new, 5
2. He gives from the spring of the water of life, 6

Conclusion:

1. Think about the seasons of your life; see the hand of God that gives you life and hope; always keep the hope of eternity alive within you.
2. Our wish for one another and for our community is John 20:30-31.
3. May you keep the hope of life near and dear to your hearts in the coming year!