

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church—Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod  
New Year's Eve  
December 31, 2025  
Sermon by Pastor Gary A. Pufahl  
**Happy New You!**

Since you have purified your souls by obeying the truth, resulting in sincere brotherly love, love one another constantly from a pure heart. <sup>23</sup>For you have been born again, not from perishable seed but from imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. <sup>24</sup>For:

All flesh is like grass,  
and all its glory is like a flower of the field.  
The grass withers,  
and the flower falls,  
<sup>25</sup>but the word of the Lord endures forever.

And this is the word that was preached to you.

—1 Peter 1:22-25 EHV

The apostle Peter quotes from the book of the prophet Isaiah. And his words aren't very flattering for you and me, are they? **"All flesh is like grass, and all its glory is like a flower of the field. The grass withers, and the flower falls."**

Did anyone of you quote those words in your annual Christmas letter? "We fade, and we fall. We droop, and we die. Another year of withering and wilting has come and gone." Did any of you have that as the theme of your annual Christmas letter?

Of course not. We don't like to think about such things. And we don't like to highlight such things. But isn't that the reality?

2025 was pretty rough. I know it was rough on many of you. You've had more pain. You've faced more death. Diagnosed cancer or cancer resurfaced. Knee pain, ankle pain, arthritis and tendonitis. It's all there. And the reality is Isaiah is right and so is Peter.

And maybe it's worse than that. Your relationships are really strained. You set out in 2025 to grow in your relationship with your spouse, but it seems as though it has become more and more difficult to love her or to respect him. Glory fades. Beauty withers. The reality is that Isaiah and Peter are right.

But it's not all depressing, is it? You see, it's exactly in those moments that God has given us something to reinvigorate and rejuvenate. As you start a new year, God wants to give you something that gives you hope, endurance, and strength in those fading moments. Yes, it's true. **"All flesh is like grass, and all its glory is like a flower of the field. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord endures forever."**

And that's been true too. You see, the word of the Lord is your power source for your daily life. Even when everything around you and in you is falling apart, the word of the Lord endures. And that, the word of the Lord, not only gives you a Happy New Year, it also gives you a **Happy New You!**

Do any of you have a green thumb? I don't. I am not a horticulturist. In fact, I usually have the capabilities of killing plants rather than causing them to grow. Pastor Pautz has the green thumb. I have a black thumb.

But there is this plant that is in our front yard. I didn't plant it. It was there when we moved in five years ago. But every year it blooms with beautiful flowers. All I do is water it, and if you look at it now, it looks dead. But come spring, it will bloom beautifully.

The apostle Peter uses the picture of flowers and seeds to illustrate our lives. Just think about this. God created a seed that can produce a beautiful flower year after year. I don't have to do anything to that plant, and every year the beauty comes back. That's amazing power.

Well, look at the power that God has given you and me. The apostle Peter writes, **"For you have been born again, not from perishable seed but from imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God."**

Those words that we read in the Bible are not just a bunch of stories written thousands of years ago by some quirky religious guys. This is God's Word. And when we read the Bible, we are grabbing onto a power line that connects us to a potent power source. God's Word in the Bible has the same power as the Word that he used to create and sustain the world. God's Word has the same strength as the Word that Jesus used to bring Lazarus back from the dead. Just think, when doctors want to treat someone today they have to hook them up to IV tubes, give them

drugs, and in extreme cases try to get their hearts beating again by electro shock treatment. Jesus didn't use any of that to bring Lazarus back to life. He simply speaks his word. If Jesus' word can bring back a dead body, think of what it can do to a spiritually dead heart.

That's the power that you have in God's Word. You may not feel the jolts shocking your heart when you study God's Word, but there is still power in those words. God the Holy Spirit is speaking to your heart and mind. He assures you that you are forgiven. He reminds you of God's love in Christ. He calms your restless mind with a peace that transcends all understanding.

And the awesome thing about this power source is it's free and it's lasting. While the cost of heating and powering our homes may be on the rise, the cost of strengthening and maintaining faith will never change. God's Word is not only free, it's reliable because it endures forever. You will never experience a power outage. The power grid won't fail. No, **"the word of the Lord endures forever."** Therefore, those who plug into the Word will endure forever as well. You will endure forever. **Happy New You!**

God wants you to tap into that power source for your Happy New You. Peter writes, **"Since you have purified your souls by obeying the truth, resulting in sincere brotherly love, love one another constantly from a pure heart."**

Since the Word has purified us, we can love one another with a sincere love. The original meaning of the word "sincere" means "to be without a mask." When the Greeks put on plays, the actors would change their character by exchanging the mask that they held in front of their face. When Peter admonishes us to love each other with a sincere love, he is directing us to love one another with a love that is not masked, or feigned.

Well, that's easier said than done, isn't it? We're pretty good at making small talk, joking and laughing with someone that we may inwardly despise. Instead of talking out our differences, we would rather mask them. Instead of giving our spouse, brother, sister, or child our undivided attention, we think that if we make a few comments and nod our head as if interested, we can trick them into thinking that we really care about what they have to say. Is that what Peter had in mind when he talked about loving each other with an unmasked love? Hardly!

Sincere love takes work. There is no doubt about that. Our sinful nature wants us to believe that it's a lot easier to go on despising someone and holding a grudge than talking things out. It also wants us to think that our time belongs to us and we can do with it what we want, even if that means ignoring the needs of others.

Sincere love takes work. And while sincere love takes work, God has given us a tool to help us overcome our masked love. He's given you his Word. As you plug into his Word, you will see how God's sincere love moved him to send his Son to die for our sins. The more we gaze at that love, the more that we see a God who is love, the more we will reflect that sincere love to others. The more we work on our relationship with Jesus, the more we are empowered to work on our relationship with each other.

So, as you make plans for a Happy New Year, God has plans for a **Happy New You**. He has given you his powerful Word so that you can live a completely different life. He has purified your souls so that you love one another constantly from a pure heart. **Happy New You! Amen.**