

**Then I thought, “To this I will appeal:**

**the years of the right hand of the Most High.”**

**<sup>11</sup> I will remember the deeds of the LORD;**

**yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago.**

**<sup>12</sup> I will meditate on all your works**

**and consider all your mighty deeds.**

**<sup>13</sup> Your ways, O God, are holy.**

**What god is so great as our God?**

**<sup>14</sup> You are the God who performs miracles;**

**you display your power among the peoples.**

**<sup>15</sup> With your mighty arm you redeemed your people,**

**the descendants of Jacob and Joseph. (NIV84)**

Theme: 2013: Another year of God's Blessings.

So, how was your year? How was 2013 for you? When look back on this past year, what are your overall impressions—what do you think of? Is this a year that 5, 10, 15 years from now, you will look fondly upon, or will it bring back bad memories, or will it simply blend in together with all the other years around it?

When you think back at your year I'm sure there were some highs and some lows. Like any other year, there were certainly some good along with some bad. We have the tendency to focus on the lows. And perhaps you've had quite a bit of lows. The economy isn't all that hot. It seems as if the government doesn't always have our best interests in mind. Maybe it's family strife, problems at work, or issues with school. You worry about how to make ends meet. Your loved one is sick and dying. 2013 may not have been all that great for you. Asaph, the author of Psalm 77 felt the same way about his life. Before our text he expresses his despair. **When I was in distress, I sought the Lord; at night I stretched out untiring hands and my soul refused to be comforted. I remembered you, O God, and I groaned; I mused, and my spirit grew faint.** And this caused him to doubt God's love, care, and protection. He wondered if the Lord was angry at him, or simply failed to keep his promises. Don't we often

feel the same way? You look back at our year and remember all the pain, all the struggles, all the hardships and difficulties that you faced. Your spirit grows faint, you are overcome with grief and sorrow, and begin to doubt God's love.

What did Asaph do when he had the same feelings? He turned to God and his Word. And he looked back at what God had done in the past. **To this I will appeal: the years of the right hand of the Most High. I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago.** Asaph sought and found comfort in God's Word. There he was reminded of the many and great things the Lord had done. Later on in this psalm, Asaph would mention how God created the world. And how he delivered them from the Egyptians. When we fall into despair and we are filled with all kinds of grief, we do the same thing as Asaph. We turn to God in his Word. And we are reminded of his great love for us and his power to take care of us. We see how he helps the weak and lifts up the lowly. We remember that he knows our needs and understand our thoughts. He knows what is best for us and will give us everything we need. We don't have to worry about what we have faced this past year. Our grief and sorrows are melted away. For in the past God has taken care of everything. And he will continue to do so.

But you look back on this year and your heart still sinks. Something weighs you down. And once again, you begin to doubt. It's your sin. Numerous times a day you lost the battle with your sinful nature. The good you wanted to do, you failed to do. The evil that you didn't want to do—that you kept on doing. By now you can't remember specifically most of the sins that you committed this past year. They kind of all blend together over time. But I'm sure that there are at least a few that stand out. There are at least a few that make you sick to your stomach just thinking about them. You have guilt and remorse over what you've done. And you wonder how God could possibly love such a horrible and wicked sinner like you. So like we did before, we look at the past. And we see what God has done year after year. Asaph mentions what God did in the past in verse 15. **With your mighty arm you redeemed your people, the descendants of Jacob and Joseph.** Just as God delivered his children

from the Egyptians, he will also deliver you. He has redeemed you, or bought you back. He paid the ransom price you deserve to pay for your sins. The ransom price of eternal death was paid for by Christ. And he accomplished this through his suffering and death on the cross. As Peter says, **You know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.**

And so when you look back at all the sins you have committed this past year, your heart doesn't need to sink. There is no reason to fall into despair. Or to be filled with grief. For God sent his Son to suffer and die in your place. He removed the guilt of the sins of the whole world. Your sins will not come back to you to haunt you. You don't have to be afraid of eternal damnation. For Christ has redeemed us and brought us back to God. And that makes 2013 a good year.

You had a good year. Even though your heart may be full of sorrow and grief, in 2013 God has given you another year of his blessings. And that makes 2013 a good year.

But what about others? Or what about the Church as a whole? Again it doesn't seem as if it was a good year. The world has become more and more bold in their sins. Much of God's word is denied. God's commands are ignored or simply rejected. It has gotten to the point this year, that even those who try to do what is right, and warn people of sin, and who have Christian morals are vilified and called intolerant. Overall attendance is down. And fewer people are professing to be Christian.

It doesn't seem as if 2013 was a good year for the Church. And our congregation is no exception. On numerous occasions there were too many empty pews. Sunday School and Bible Class attendance hasn't been all that spectacular. Less children have been attending BASIC, VBS, and similar opportunities to hear God's Word. We really didn't gain too many members this year either—we had no adult confirmands or baptisms. Our offerings weren't where they should be and we had to cut over 10,000 dollars from our budget for next year. It seems as if 2013 wasn't all that great.

But look again. Today we review and remember all the great things the Lord has done for us, the Church, and our congregation. Christ has been with us throughout the year. The gospel is still heard. God's Word was still taught in its truth and purity. The law and the gospel were applied to our lives in the sermons. God's children grew in their knowledge of him in Bible Class and Sunday school. Sins were still washed away, faith was given, and sinners were still cloaked in Christ's robe of righteousness through the waters of baptism. Christ still gave us his true body and blood in, with, and under the bread and the wine in the Lord's Supper for the forgiveness of sins. Those who have died in the faith have moved on to this veil of tears to eternal bliss with the Father.

2013 has been a good year. It's been another year of God's grace. Another year hearing his gospel and growing in faith and knowledge of his Word. Another year of forgiveness. Another year of God's blessings. When you look back at 2013, you can see it as another good year. For God has continued to bless you, just as he always had. God has still forgiven you and still promises you eternal life. So all the bad things that happened this past year to you, don't matter. You have many issues to deal with—things that would cause you grief and sorrow. But those feelings have all been removed. For you remember the great things the Lord has done. You know forgiveness and the perfect life waiting for you in heaven. Yes, 2013 has been another year of God's blessings. Amen.