

Uncharted Waters

Scripture: Isaiah 43:1 – 7 and Matthew 8:23 - 27

1/2/22

Think of all the different ways we celebrate the New Year.

A ball drops in NYC in Time Square. The ball is located on the roof of One Time Square. This event started in 1907 and now usually attracts 2 million people. The ball is adorned with 2688 sparking Waterford Crystals with lighting supplied by 37,256 LED lights. The ball is twelve feet in diameter and weighs 11,875 pounds. The ball begins its descent at 11:59:00 ET.

In London England a very large crowd gather near Parliament to count down to Big Ben's chimes as the New Year approaches. The chimes begin playing five minutes before midnight.

In Sydney Australia's Harbor, fireworks erupt at midnight to welcome the New Year. These fireworks are viewed in person by a large crowd and many boats in the harbor. The fireworks are also viewed worldwide on TV.

Many other cities mark the New Year with local celebrations.

New Orleans has fireworks and lots of parties throughout the city. They invite people to walk around with a drink in their hand and head to Jackson Street in the French Quarter for a very large celebration.

San Francisco has a very large boat gathering in the harbor with fireworks at midnight. All different kinds of horns are blown at midnight.

Disney World in Orlando Florida has a great big fireworks show around Cinderella's Castle in the Magic Kingdom which draws many families there each year to celebrate the New Year.

In LA California in the Grand Park, they gather many food trucks and provided free music and usually a large group gathers for this event.

In Atlanta Georgia, they drop a 362 pound peach from Underground Atlanta, a downtown shopping center. The peach starts its descent at 11:59:00, just like in NYC.

In Nashville Tennessee, they have their signature 'Music note' drop at midnight which starts a huge music festival in the streets of Nashville.

And, finally, the only local New Year's Eve celebration was the Balcony Ball Drop at Bayside. This will be only the second year this took place.

There is something exciting about welcoming in a New Year and the fresh start it brings. On New Year's Day we push out into new waters! We wonder if the beginning of a New Year will bring new friendships and new opportunities. We enter a New Year like a boat entering uncharted waters!

For all its excitement, a New Year can be an unsettling time. None of us know what the future will hold. None of us know what storms a New Year may hold.

Many New Year celebration involve fireworks. Fireworks were invented in China and fireworks were used to ward off evil spirits and make way for a new season of prosperity.

A New Year's resolution dates back to the Babylonians who made vows to appease their gods. Such acts were an attempt to make an unknown future secure.

In our scripture reading from the book of Isaiah, the Israelite people are a conquered people by the Babylonian Empire and God sends them a message through Isaiah. God tells the enslaved people of Israel that in time He will restore them to their homeland. Isaiah tells them to not fear. Isaiah tells them that when they pass through the waters, God will be with them. Through all uncharted waters God will be with them.

Later, Jesus said something similar to Isaiah when He and the disciples were caught sailing in a violent storm. Jesus ask his disciples – ‘Why are you so afraid.’ Jesus told them this before commanding the waters to be still.

Jesus is telling us something similar to Isaiah when He talks to us about the uncharted waters of a New Year – ‘Why are we so afraid.’ Jesus tells us this before He will command the waters of our lives to be still.

Today, we are pushing into a New Year. We are entering uncharted waters. We do not know what this New Year has in store for us. We do not know what we will face, but we must understand the Jesus will be with us! He will be with us no matter what we will face. We will be with us in these uncharted waters of a New Year and his power will calm the waves!

So, my friends, what possibilities excite you about this New Year? What worries can you place in God’s hands?

A sailor who is entering uncharted waters at night has two possible ways to make it through:

#1) By using a sextant to read the stars. A sextant is a doubly reflecting navigational instrument that measures the angular distance between two visible objects. A good sailor and a sextant can navigate uncharted waters at night.

#2) By using a lighthouse if near the shore to navigate uncharted waters. Lighthouses are placed onshore overlooking the water while other lighthouses are built offshore on reefs or on rock shales. A good sailor at night can use a lighthouse to navigate uncharted waters or to avoid danger.

As we enter uncharted waters in 2022, we can also look to the stars for guidance like the three wise men did. We can follow the star to lead us to Jesus Christ. We can look skyward to the heavens above to find guidance in 2022.

As we enter uncharted waters of 2022, we can also look for a light to lead us – the Light of Jesus Christ. The light of Christ will give us guidance in 2022.

Let us pray:

God, thank you that whatever this New Year brings; what uncharted waters lie ahead for us; You will be with us in it.

May we always seek your guidance and leadership in this New Year. AMEN.