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Selah: Stop, Look, Listen- January 2, 2024

The Lord be with you and a Happy New Year to you too.

It was the Roman Emperor Julius Caesar who established January 1 as New Year's Day, as Julius Caesar thought that the month January named after the Roman God, Janus, that's spelled Jan us. Well, he thought this day as being the door to the year. He thought that because the Roman God Janus was the deity watching over doorways, watching over all entrances and exits. And, and that's the reason why Janice is always portrayed as having two faces, one face for looking backwards and one face for looking ahead. And that's what I want to do in these next few moments as I want to look backwards. And I wanna look ahead, I want to look backwards over the year 2023 and look ahead to 2024.

And so let's look backwards for a moment and I invite you to look backwards over 2023. I invite you to look backwards over it with Thanksgiving. I say that simply because as Christians, we can always look backwards with Thanksgiving because as Christians, we can know that any evil done to us any harm done to us that God intends. God works it for our good. We can know that we see this. For instance, in Genesis chapter 50 I'm looking at Genesis chapter 50 verse 20 here where Joseph can say to his brothers who sold him into slavery in Egypt, Joseph can say to them, even though you intended to harm me. God intended it for good. And you know that same thing is true for you. It's, it's true for me as we look back over the past year because our heavenly Father is all wise. He's all loving. He's all powerful. We can say that any evil intended to harm us in 2023 God intends it for our good.

Well, it's just like the Apostle Paul says in Romans eight verse 28 we know that God works all things together for good, for those who love Him who are called according to his purpose. No, we wouldn't say that everything that happened to us in 2023 was good. I mean, no way. But what we can say as we look backwards is we can say that because of a sovereign, all loving God that he has intended it and he works it for our good. So today, as we look back on the year 2023 we can look back at it with Thanksgiving.

Ok. That's looking backwards to 2023. How about looking ahead to 2024? Well, I know, things don't look so good for the economy and looks like the presidential election is going to be down and dirty and there's a war raging well as Christians as Children of the heavenly Father, you and I, we can look at 2024 with faith because Jesus is just what we celebrated at Christmas. Jesus is Emmanuel. Jesus is God with us. So we're looking ahead with faith. I like what it says in the New Testament Book of Hebrews chapter 13 verse six, Jesus has said, I will never leave you or forsake you. So we can say with confidence, the Lord is my helper. I will not be afraid. What can one do to me? End of quote.

So here are these first days of the new year. We can as Christians, we can look back on 2023 with Thanksgiving and we can look ahead to 2024 with faith because what we just celebrated at Christmas, it stands true that Jesus is God with us. Jesus is God for us. We look to our past with



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Thanksgiving. We look to our future with faith. I mean, that's all wrapped up in being a Christian. That's the past, that's the future.

But what about today? What about these 24 hours? What can we say for today? How are we to look at today? Well, we can look at today with what, well, I'm gonna call it contentment. We can look at the day with contentment, that whatever the stock market does today, whatever goes wrong in the world today, you and I have a shepherd who is leading the way ahead, the shepherd who cares for us. So that we can say with the psalmist, David, the Lord is my shepherd. I shall not be in want you and I have today what the shepherd wants for us today. So we can look at the day with contentment.

The Apostle Paul says it like this. In first Timothy chapter six verse six, he says, there is a great gain in godliness combined with contentment. And then I'm a Roman prison cell. The Apostle Paul can say in Philippians chapter four verse 11, I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

My mother loved poetry and would often quote poetry to me. I close with one of my mother's favorite poems. Said the Robin to the sparrow, "I should really like to know why these anxious human beings rush about and worry." So said the sparrow to the Robin friend, "I think that it must be that they have no heavenly father such as cares for you and me." Well, because we do have a heavenly father who cares even for sparrows and he cares for you and me.

We say goodbye to 2023 with thanksgiving and we say to 2024 bring it on as we welcome 2024 with faith. And today we are content with what our Heavenly Father gives to us. Three important words I think for us in these first days of a new year, Thanksgiving faith, contentment. Those three words add up to a, to a life well lived.

I am Tim Smith, a fellow traveler. Thank you for listening. Until next time.