



***Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign:
The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son,
and will call him Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14 NIV).***

Greetings, dear friends in Christ, as we step out this week and move on into a new year!

NOW, What IF? — the magnificence and significance of revisiting and celebrating the birth of Jesus this past Advent and Christmas season was not as apparent to those around us? The precious name ***Immanuel*** comes from the masculine Hebrew name: God with us. And Isaiah is being very adamant here: Hear now, people of Israel! It is a prophecy fulfilled: sign — virgin — son — Immanuel. He is with us and He equips us too.

Paul told the people of Colossae: ***And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him*** (Colossians 3:17). Hearing those key words, my brain does an exciting spin. That's us! We are called into the Lord's Army to share the Word and do the deeds!

We know, in the same breath, stepping out into 2025 indeed, with the vast scope of this world we have inherited, where we see wars, suffering, starvation, pain and divisiveness, that this will require the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

When the ball descended and the clock struck midnight this new year, we have the comfort of protection: helmet, breastplate, sword, and the Word, which should empower us to become His Mighty Army — called to glorify, magnify, edify, amplify, and make significant changes, touching the lives of others — through prayer support, hospitality, and certainly our mighty Mites and mission gifts and grants.

It is only through this past season of Advent and the support of mid-week services, regular weekly Bible Study groups, potlucks and crafts and fellowship before and after service, and a fine choir stepping up to add to our Joy, have I personally been able to cope with our shorter days and setting back our clocks; not my favorite season coupled with cold rain and mighty winds. And I'm truly such a light-sensitive soul.

Might we then look out for one another in our church family, for their needs for safe winter travel, a ride perhaps, a shared lunch out after Bible study, a cheerful phone call to reach out on a regular basis, and fold us, each one, into the challenging winter warmth of His Love — remembering, as the Book of Isaiah told us just *last month*:

He is an Everlasting Lord; His steadfast love endures forever!

Joyfully & Respectfully Yours,
Pat Reck, HUG Author