

## **EMERGING VICTORIOUSLY: A NEW DAY—January 2017**

Allow me a secular moment as I share some words from singer/producer will.i.am's political compilation album, *Change Is Now*.

*It feels like we're swimming upstream  
It feels like we're stuck in between  
A rock and a hard place,  
We've been through the heartaches  
And lived through the darkest days  
If you and I made it this far,  
Well then, hey, we can make it all the way*

It IS a new day and a new year. While this song was inspired and produced by will.i.am as a tribute to President Barack Obama's victory in 2009, some of the words still ring true in 2017. The President-elect's victory comes with much acrimony and resistance from some, and praise, great expectations and hope for '*making America great again*,' for others.

As we enter this 'new era', might I suggest that rather than focusing on *who* is President, those of us who call ourselves Christian, focus on *who is King?* Life becomes more peaceful and palatable when we put our trust in God rather than man, and when we look within ourselves to find and walk in our purpose, instead of looking around for others to foster or change things. God has gifted each of us with a purpose, talents and gifts for such a time as this. 1 John 4:4 (KJV) tells us, "*Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*"

Those of us who are truly seeking something new, different or better this year, understand that we cannot continue to do the same things, in the same manner that we did last year. Something has to change and that change starts with us!

I encourage you to *emerge victoriously* in 2017. Each of us has the unique power to discourage, ignore or rebuke external energy, propaganda and people. We have the power within to determine our attitude, our response and our destiny.

As we emerge victoriously in 2017, we must find our footing and grab hold to God's unchanging word for guidance, comfort and peace. Christ has not left us defenseless or powerless. We have the immutable Word of God—*His laws, requirements and guidelines*—to help us successfully navigate life on this earth.

We should view ourselves as stewards of God's vineyard. Each of us is or has the power to be master gardeners in the vineyard of life. We can plant, nurture, cultivate and reap bumper crops, or we can moan, groan and allow external forces—*of which we have no control*—to render us useless and defeated while we continue to yield poor harvests.

We can work hard to ensure that the crops we yield are plentiful and bear good fruit by starting each day tending to our garden of life. We can drench our day in prayer, weeding out bitterness and unforgiving spirits. We can plow ahead, enriching the soil of our lives by digging deeper into God's Word. We can talk to the Landowner (*God*) daily and, instead of asking for things, 'listen' to and for His response. We may occasionally have to 'shake things up,' till our soil and spread more seeds, to ensure we yield productive crops. These seeds include prayer, studying God's Word and waiting for His response.

If we want to make a difference in our small garden plot, we may have to unearth new or uncharted territory. Instead of complaining about a poor crop, we may need to seek ways to leave our comfort zone, ask for help, and explore other options as we plant seeds outside of our own gardens. These new seeds may not yield fruit immediately, but 1 Corinthians 3:6-9 (NIV) reads, "*I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building.*"

Here are some ways we can emerge victoriously in 2017, to become master gardeners of our lives:

***Daily nurture our crop and pull out the weeds of destruction and defeat:***

The storms of life have a way of washing away our joy, peace and happiness, but through it all, we must never lose focus of God and His promises to us. Indeed, His promises are more important than people's opinion. Christ has given us dominion over our garden of life, and yielding good fruit does not come without some sacrifice. Dig in. Be steadfast and unmovable. We shall reap what we sow.

***Believe that we have the capability and the right tools to yield good crops.***

We must see ourselves winning in the garden of life. Don't depend on others to tell us how bright our future will be, because God's Word does. We diminish the authority that Christ has given us when we restrict ourselves to the opinion of others. Moreover, when and if there is a discrepancy between what we see and what God said, we must trust God. This year, I encourage you to walk like you KNOW God's promises are true, and witness the abundant fruit of His blessings.

***Work hard to yield a bountiful crop:***

Have you ever had a plant that died because you failed to water it, nurture it and give it love and attention? Don't get distracted in your garden of life. Keep your focus on Christ and you will see the fruits of your labor. God wants us to operate in our giftedness all the time, not just when things are comfortable. And, He can bring forth our gifts in usual places, so don't be afraid or uncomfortable planting in an unfamiliar garden. God is with us in our discomfort and works that discomfort to the greater good.

***Be positive and prepared to harvest what God gives you.***

We must be ready to receive and harvest the blessings God gives us. Throughout our season of life, God sends tests our way to strengthen, develop and draw us closer to

Him. A faith that has not been tested is a faith that cannot be trusted. We must not be afraid of failure; we can always replant again, if need be. Throughout this 'pruning process' we are strengthened and, ultimately, we become the master gardener that God is grooming for more blessings.

What kind of crop will emerge in your garden in 2017? Will it yield bountiful fruit—enough to for you and enough to sustain and feed others—or will your crop wither and die from lack of care, attention and nurturing? We have choices. We can become villains, victors or victims. We can become master gardeners—*where others are amazed at the fruit we yield and share in the benefits of our garden*—or we can lay dormant, dead, disillusioned; bearing no fruit.

I choose to emerge victoriously and I encourage you to join me!

Peace and Power,

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Senior Pastor

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