The spectrum could not be wider than it is at this very moment. On the one hand, newspapers and magazines are looking back and printing their year-in-review editions. On the other hand, check-out line tabloids are looking forward and printing their predictions for the coming year.

More than any other time, the end of the old year/beginning of the new year turns our thoughts to what has been and well as what might be.

So what was your year-in-review like? Perhaps you reached some milestone or suffered some setback or made some decision that you will never have to - or maybe never wish to - repeat again. Maybe the highs overcompensated for the lows and the joys outweighed the sorrows; or maybe not. Maybe on balance everything went about the way you thought it would go (or planned it to go), or maybe not.

And as far as the year ahead? Right now it is a blank slate. Only God knows whether at this time next year 2020 will go down in our personal memoirs as a boom or a bust. It may be a banner year in achievements - or difficulties. Then again, maybe it will just be a routine, uneventful year marked by another birthday but no major changes or shifts. And that is generally okay with most of us.

Whatever the case may be for us personally in 2020, there is always one thing - better, one person - we can bank on. And that, as our text points out, is Jesus Christ. On account of Jesus Christ - who he is, what he has done for us, and what he continues to do for us - we can be happily confident that regardless of any or all personal changes, 2020 WILL BE A YEAR OF SATISFYING SAMENESS. The reason why we can say this, as indicated in our text, is because Jesus Christ is his name and because Jesus Christ is the same.

Everyone knows that tomorrow is the first day of the year. If you are a sports fan, you are looking forward to a pretty solid day of college football. Business people know it as the day to begin a clean ledger of profits and losses. Those of us looking to make some personal changes generally allow the slide to continue through this evening but tomorrow is serious business about starting good habits or losing bad ones.

However, it must be noted that for Christians there is far more significance to tomorrow than sports, business or New Year resolutions. Did you know that in the early Christian Church January 1 was originally called The Octave Of Christmas (octave means the 8th day). It was so named because on this 8th day of Christmas the Christ-child was circumcised and given the name Jesus.

That name is worthy of our review. We call him Jesus (which is derived from the Greek form of his name), but when he was growing up Mary and Joseph would have called him the more Hebrew-sounding Yeshua or Joshua. You will recall they did not come up with that name on their own. It was the name the angel Gabriel had instructed them to give him.

He also told them why: Because he will save his people from their sins. In other words, this name was given - and this Child was given - to meet a need. Our need. Specifically, our need to be delivered from the damning consequences of sin before a just and holy God. So the reason why he came is reflected in his very name: in its simplest form Jesus means Savior. And that is what he is - our Savior.

As beautiful a thought as that is, we are really only half done. He is Jesus Christ. Whereas Jesus is his personal name, Christ is his title. It is also worthy of review.

Christ is the Greek, or New Testament, rendition of the Hebrew, or Old Testament
The word Messiah. Both mean the same thing: The anointed one. Both call to mind a solemn Old Testament custom reserved only for people of special position and honor. Anointing (the pouring of oil over one's head) was the public sign that these people had been set aside by God for a special duty or purpose.

While we can find many anointed ones in Old Testament history, we find only one who is called THE Anointed one. And that, of course, is Jesus the Christ, set apart for the special duty from God to save mankind from its sin. We know how this salvation came about. He accomplished it through his perfect life in our place, his sacrificial death as the substitute payment for all mankind, and his glorious resurrection.

The best news yet is that we, who, by the grace of God trust in him as Savior and as Messiah, joyfully bear his name. We are the modern day disciples of Jesus, and we are Christians (followers of Christ) in the simplest sense of the word. Because we are, the eternal future looks bright. And if our eternal future looks bright, the temporary future looks bright as well. Because this same Lord and Savior has promised to meet our every physical, emotional and spiritual need.

Which means 2020 will be a year of satisfying sameness. Regardless of what may come into our lives, we know him and what he has done for us and where we will one day be. How can we be sure? It is all in the name. And Jesus Christ is his name.

The second reason 2020 will be a year of satisfying sameness is because Jesus Christ is the same. Listen again to the words of our text: Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. These are beautiful and powerful and consoling words. They speak of Christ's consistency and constancy and commitment toward us.

Let's get specific. What do we see in Jesus Christ yesterday that comforts us today? Let's go to the Bible for some examples. Jesus Christ is true God, and in our God we see many things.

For instance, we see in him the power to help. What do the following incidents from the Old Testament bring to mind? The parting of the Red Sea, the destruction of Jericho, the three men in the fiery furnace, Daniel in the lion's den.

Or how about these events found in the New Testament? Jesus stilling the storm. Jesus healing countless people. Jesus feeding the 5000. Jesus raising the dead.

In each of those cases we see the power of God to help his people. This provides us with a great deal of comfort, because we are his people today.

Please don't misunderstand. I am not echoing so many televangelists of recent vintage who tell us that we should expect - by which they really mean demand - miracles from God. We leave all things in God's direction. What we are simply saying is that Jesus Christ is just as powerful today as he was yesterday. He is no less God now than he was back then.

Perhaps we can expand on that thought just a bit, because this attribute of God is the one that seems to be routinely challenged by those who want to justify their unbelief or non-commitment to Christianity in general or a Christian church in particular.

I would guess many of us have found ourselves put in the position of being God's lawyer. We have heard the questions and they are asked far more to taunt than to genuinely inquire. If God is so powerful, then why are there starving children in Africa, or war with all its fallout and innocent victims, or bad things that happen to good people, or childhood leukemia, or you-fill-in-the-blank of another example that seems to indicate the powerlessness of God?

The truth is we do not know the mind of God. Why he allows what he allows falls
within his divine wisdom. But this we do know. God is God nothing less, and man is man, nothing more. And Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and tomorrow.

In Jesus we see compassion. Compassion for his people is another of the indelible marks of Jesus' character. Think of the compassion Jesus had on the crowds that flocked around him. Think of the compassion he had even for those who rejected him. See him weeping over Jerusalem. See him forgiving his tormentors on the cross. See him gently gathering the little children around him, even when his disciples tried to shoo them away.

Finally, in Jesus we see love. Think of the love he had for his friend Lazarus. Think of the love he had for his disciples and followers. Think of that stubborn, undeterred love for mankind which led him to die.

And here again is the good news. This same Jesus is here for us today with his power and his compassion and his love. And we are the beneficiaries. Therefore we can walk into this New Year with courage and confidence.

Will there be personal difficulties that face us in 2020? Christ will be there to strengthen us. Will there be setbacks? Christ will be there to help. Will there be sorrow? Christ will be there to comfort and console. Will there be decisions to be made? Christ will be there to guide. Will there be times of uncertainty and anxiety? Christ will be there to envelop us in his love and with his personal promise that all things work together for good. Will there be death - either our own or a loved one? Christ will be there to usher his people into the Promised Land of eternal life he has prepared for those who know him as Savior.

He will be there with all those things because changelessness is what Jesus Christ is all about. He is the same yesterday and today and forever. And in that sameness of Christ we find our strength, courage and satisfaction. So, what will 2020 bring? God only knows. But whatever may happen, one thing remains the same: Jesus Christ, who in the words of the hymnist is

**Our God, our help in ages past**
**Our hope for years to come**
**Our shelter from the stormy blast**
**And our eternal home.** Amen.

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