

PSALM 81:10

**O P E N
W I D E**

REV. IN KEE KIM

Scripture Passage

Psalms 81:10

I am the Lord your God, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. Open your mouth wide and I will fill it.

Sermon

Open Wide

Happy New Year! A new year finally came. 2020 was a long and painful year. How wonderful it is for all of us to be able to worship God together on the first Sunday of 2021! In 2020, we lost loved ones whom we had spent time together and shared much joy and laughter. We shared many tears and dealt with many struggles. There were some regrets too. But we also had the opportunity to think about what is truly important to us. We had time to question the purpose and meaning of life. It was an eventful year. Now let us send away all our sorrow, pain, and regrets. Let us leave them in God's hands. Let us welcome the new year, 2021, with a new hope.

Start Anew

One thing good about the new year is that we can start anew. The New Year gives us hope to start again. I think that's what life is. Life has the ability to start again. That ability is ingrained in our life. It is built in. When God created us, God made our life that way because we need it. God gave us the opportunity to start again.

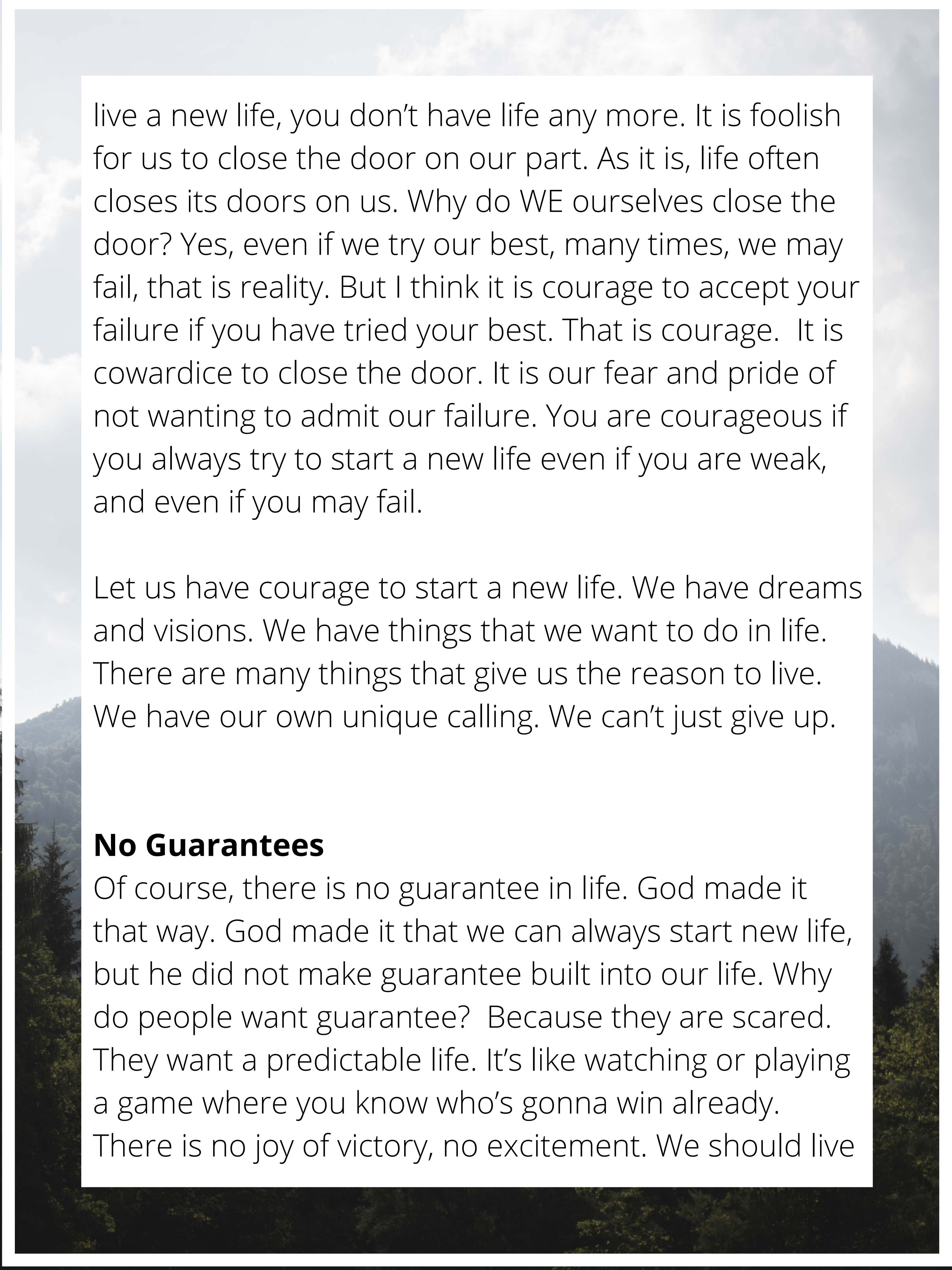
It is designed in our life. Isn't that what forgiveness is? Forgiveness is God's way of giving us a new opportunity to start again, to start a new life. So in the new year, we have hope to start again.

Some people may cynically say, "What is the point?" We will soon fall back into our old lifestyle. We never keep our resolutions. So, I heard that some people don't call them resolutions but intentions. Instead of saying, I have a resolution to lose 5 pounds, they say, I have intention to adopt a healthier lifestyle. It doesn't matter whether you call it resolution or intention, change is hard to make. So, I understand why people are so cynical about changes.

But I believe that even if real change is rare, we should never give up trying. Even if we fail and fall back into our old self, still, I believe we should keep trying to live a new life. If we don't even have the desire to start again, what is left for us? If we don't even have the hope of starting a new life, it will be pretty depressing.

Courage to Accept Failure

The moment you give up trying to live a new life, that is the moment you die. The moment you give up trying to



live a new life, you don't have life any more. It is foolish for us to close the door on our part. As it is, life often closes its doors on us. Why do WE ourselves close the door? Yes, even if we try our best, many times, we may fail, that is reality. But I think it is courage to accept your failure if you have tried your best. That is courage. It is cowardice to close the door. It is our fear and pride of not wanting to admit our failure. You are courageous if you always try to start a new life even if you are weak, and even if you may fail.

Let us have courage to start a new life. We have dreams and visions. We have things that we want to do in life. There are many things that give us the reason to live. We have our own unique calling. We can't just give up.

No Guarantees

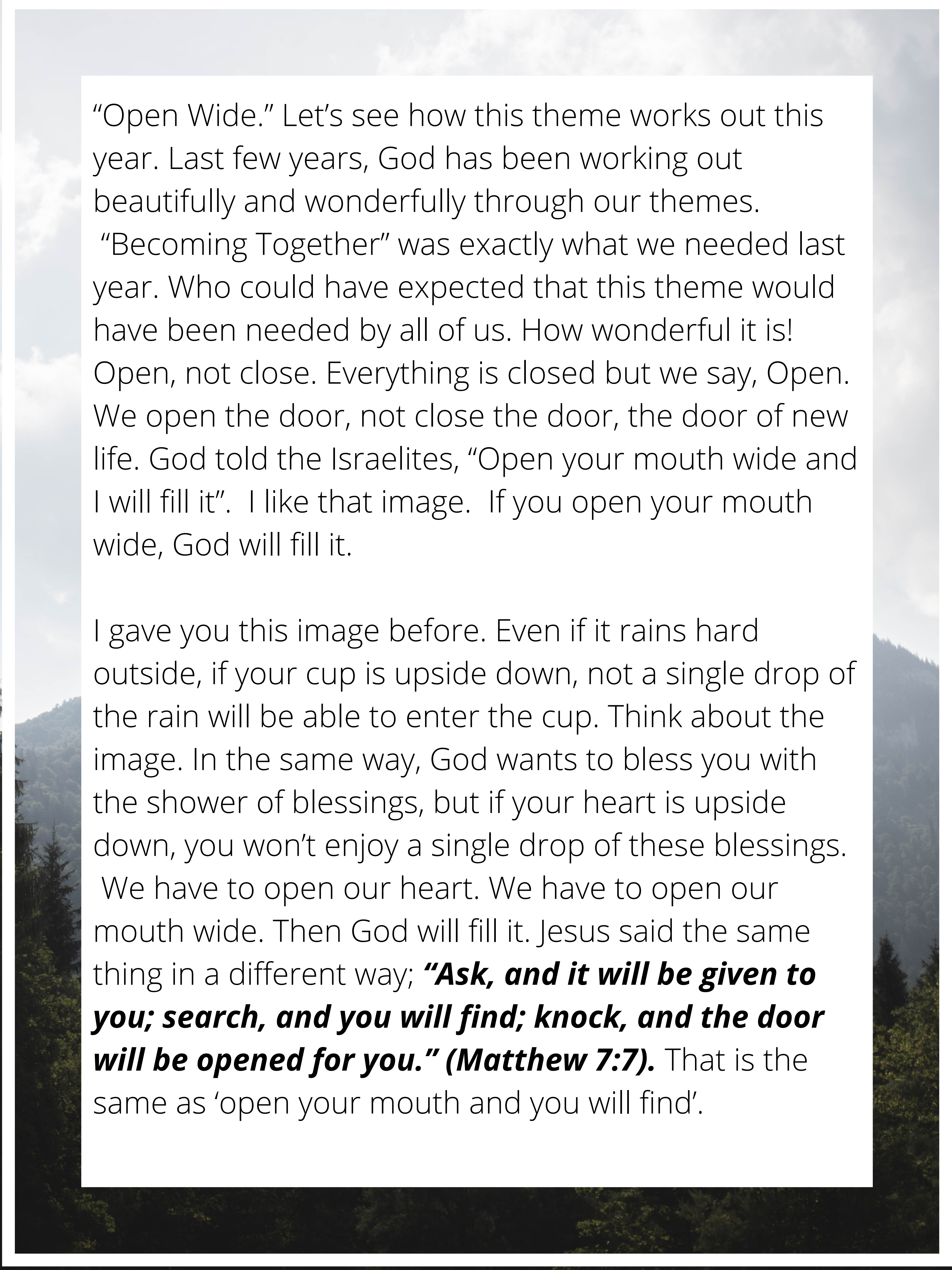
Of course, there is no guarantee in life. God made it that way. God made it that we can always start new life, but he did not make guarantee built into our life. Why do people want guarantee? Because they are scared. They want a predictable life. It's like watching or playing a game where you know who's gonna win already. There is no joy of victory, no excitement. We should live

our lives with faith, not looking for guarantee. That's why God did not put guarantee in life, so we can live with faith. When you look for guarantee, you will be disappointed and discouraged because things do not always work out as you wish. But with faith, you will be able to *keep on keeping on*. With faith, we can soar on wings like eagles.

Open Wide

There is a Scripture passage I like. I want you to hear this on the first Sunday of the new year: ***Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, 'My way is hidden from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God'? Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint (Isaiah 40:27-31).***

What a good passage. We chose next year's theme as



“Open Wide.” Let’s see how this theme works out this year. Last few years, God has been working out beautifully and wonderfully through our themes.

“Becoming Together” was exactly what we needed last year. Who could have expected that this theme would have been needed by all of us. How wonderful it is! Open, not close. Everything is closed but we say, Open. We open the door, not close the door, the door of new life. God told the Israelites, “Open your mouth wide and I will fill it”. I like that image. If you open your mouth wide, God will fill it.

I gave you this image before. Even if it rains hard outside, if your cup is upside down, not a single drop of the rain will be able to enter the cup. Think about the image. In the same way, God wants to bless you with the shower of blessings, but if your heart is upside down, you won’t enjoy a single drop of these blessings.

We have to open our heart. We have to open our mouth wide. Then God will fill it. Jesus said the same thing in a different way; ***“Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you.” (Matthew 7:7).*** That is the same as ‘open your mouth and you will find’.

Praise God

Let us open our heart. This Covid made us shrink. It made us see our life with the eyes of fear. Isolation, restriction, bubbles; these are the words we are familiar with. It is a good thing to do for now. We should do that. But if it becomes our lifestyle, it is not good. It should be just a temporary measure, but we cannot make that our lifestyle.

What can we do now then? What God tells me is open your mouth and praise God. That's the message God gave me. That was what Psalmist said. Psalm 81 begins like this: ***"Sing aloud to God our strength; shout for joy to the God of Jacob. Raise a song, sound the tambourine, the sweet lyre with the harp. Blow the trumpet at the new moon, at the full moon, on our festal day". (Psalm 81:1-3)***

Yesterday too. The passage that came to me for the Inner Voice was Psalm 98. ***"O sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvellous things. His right hand and his holy arm have gained him victory. Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises." (Psalm 98:1, 4)***. I didn't know why God gave me this thought, but

when I thought about it, I realized how appropriate this is. Praising God is what we need to do. It will open our heart. Praise has the power to release us from bondage. Praise exalts our soul and frees us from darkness.

Power in Praise

There is a very interesting story in Acts. It was when Paul and Silas were captured in the prison in Philippi. When they were in bondage, they decided to praise God. ***“About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was an earthquake, so violent that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone’s chains were unfastened.” (Acts 16:25, 26).***

Their praise freed them from the chains, from the prison. When darkness covers you don’t let it cover you, praise God. Defeat the darkness. That’s what praise does. Just whispering is good enough. It is ok not to even make sound, you can praise in your heart. There is power hidden in the praise.

Remembrance and Faith

Praise is not sentimental emotionalism. Praise has to be concretely based on God's work of salvation. The Israelites remembered how God saved them and they praised. If we are not aware of how God has been working in our lives, our praise will become empty praise.

Remembrance and Faith. These two make our praise meaningful. Remembrance and Faith. We remember how God has saved us and we believe that the same God will do the same work for us in the future. When we have that, our praise will become meaningful. This kind of praise will open our heart.

I am the Lord your God, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. Open your mouth wide and I will fill it. (Psalm 81:1). We move forward, praising God. We march forward praising God. We march towards the victory, praising God. During civil rights movement, when they started praising, "We shall overcome...". When they sang "we shall overcome" they were freed from fear and they fought for justice; they were filled with courage. They marched towards the freedom from the bondage of racism.

March with Prayer and Praise

While praising, we can march through our troubles. Our soul will be freed from the imprisonment of darkness, despair, and fear. Our praise will release us from what binds us. Sense of loss, powerlessness, hatred, condemnation, fear, hurt; these things bind us. These things take joy out of us. Our praise will release us from all of these things that bind us. Don't let these things hold you back. Move forward, praising God. Praising is not music. Music is just a tool used not praise. Praise has to be based on remembrance and faith. It is not a musical expression, it is a faith expression.

Last week, we reflected on how to turn our worries into prayer. It does a lot of good to you. Whenever you are worried, whenever you are down, turn that into prayer. What we worry about becomes our prayer topic. Now you add praise to your life. Life will open up. Your hearts will open up. Your hope will come alive.

Open your mouth wide. God will fill it. So whenever things happen, turn it into prayer, and then praise. You will become strong. You can march through troubles, worries, darkness, doubt into victory. That is what 2021 will be about. You will march with prayer and praise.