

Christmas I 2017
St. John 1:1-18 2:1-20
December 31, 2017
St. George's Bolton
Fr. Chris

Second Chances

“And the Word was made flesh”

Isn't it hopeful to know that if you get something wrong, you'll get another chance? That is a big part of the good news of the Gospel Jesus preached to us. As long as you are breathing, there is always hope, there is always an opportunity for a second chance!

And that is what is special about the festivities we observe this evening: they are all about timing and second chances. New Year's grow out of and on the shoulders of old ones. Some of us might be happy to say goodbye to a difficult year that brought us pain and stress and loss, and are ready to welcome in a New Year: 2018- a New Year filled with hope and possibility for me! One of seemingly many chances we receive to get life right!

'In the beginning,' the Gospel says, 'in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.And the Word became flesh. That is what you need to know about God, and that is where our hope begins. Instead of giving up on us, as we might have done out of our own frustration with the willful and wandering human race, God not only went the extra mile, but did everything God could to reach out to us with this new chance for a fresh start. No more floods or threats of disaster. God came to us and loved us. God began a new chapter, a new era in human history.

God is no longer a fertile seed implanted in our human minds. God takes on flesh as one of us. Emanuel: God with us!

In the beginning was The Word... How did we begin? How we began is a memoir of our own lives up to now. The past is prologue to the present. You can try to live in the past, but it won't work for you. The present is always drawing you in, deeper and deeper. Life puts flesh on the bones of the past, and if our eyes and minds are open, informs the present and the future. We hopefully learn from our past. Those who do not are condemned to repeat it.

There is something very Adventish about the holiday we are celebrating tonight and tomorrow. Advent is a Church season that is all about time. It begs us to answer the question, "What time is it?" This holiday is again a reminder of this question and it is of course, a holiday that is all about time.

As we watch the various TV coverage tonight about New Year's Eve, there will be countdown clocks running either in the banner on the bottom of the screen or in some corner of it, counting down the hours, minutes and seconds left in 2017. In a little under 14 hours from now, 2017 will join the History Books. News pundits have been prognosticating about what it will be remembered for over the past several weeks. What will you remember it for?

Will you remember 2017 as a year that you made some important changes in your life, or came to the awareness that you needed to make changes? Have you re-affirmed God in your life by how you live? Will your New Year's resolutions be quickly forgotten or remembered throughout the New Year?

The time for the old ways, the old habits, and things of the past is fast running out on our personal clocks.

A New Day, A New Year is coming: a time for a fresh start there will be a more or less clean slate given to each of us, though not through any merit of our own. Your life's credit card will soon be reloaded in a few hours, your debts of the past year forgiven. What will you do with it? Will you take advantage of this second chance?

Only God can forgive your serious indebtedness. Only God can wipe the slate clean and give you that fresh start you long for. God is holding forth such a chance to each one of us.

We are given many chances in this life to get it right. But life is not like a hockey or football game where you can stop the clock and analyze what to do. Our clock is always running, and as Advent reminded us, our time is running out. We need to think on our feet.

The clock is ticking, as Advent just reminded us so well. It is proclaimed from the rooftops, shouted in all the streets in Advent: God is coming soon. Get Ready. Be ready. Stay ready!

Christmas proclaims that God is here. Christmas celebrates God's presence in our lives. As we turn the page on the New Year tonight, we can count the chances God has already given us and take advantage of the new one which lies before us: 2018.

New Years is known as a time for making resolutions which are soon forgotten. Make your resolutions before God. Seek change that is for the better and hold fast to it. Pray for God's support and help and God will answer your prayer and support you in your resolution to change and make changes. You do not face the New Year alone. God is always with you.

John concludes: "No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known!"

Now we know. We are so fortunate, so blessed!

Amen