

Pastor Jacob Hanson
12/25/2020

Opening Prayer

Good Morning, and Merry Christmas Beloved! The day has finally come, all those hopes and all that joyful anticipation is finally realized today! In your own lives away from the church you very well will likely be doing something special today. Opening gifts, visiting with family and friends, eating special food, etc. Today is no normal day for us, and within the life of the church it isn't any different. We celebrate Christmas Day as Christians because we recognize and remember the birth of our Savior. Jesus, God in human flesh, who came to live among us and to eventually in time go to the cross for our sins. Christmas, the birth of Christ, and Easter, the resurrection of Jesus, are inseparably linked. There is no reason to celebrate Christmas without Easter, and there is no reason to celebrate Easter without Christmas. His birth and death are intertwined, and that is why we celebrate both so much within the church. Today, as we saw in our readings, is a day of joy Beloved. Christmas morning is all about joy.

Matthew 1:21-23 reads "'She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.' Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 'Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,' which translated means, 'God with us.'" One of the things that makes this day so wonderful and memorable in our short time on earth is that it often is marked with visits with others. Even in a year such as this, when you may only be doing virtual visiting with folks, there is still immense joy to be had from another's presence. We all remember the joyful times of Christmas with the grandparents, or our first Christmas with our spouse's family, or that Christmas we had with our extended family. We treasure that closeness with others, and we need it don't we? Perhaps especially this year we need some measure of that right? Well in a season where we celebrate with joy being with others, we should remember that God Himself is with us, and that is worth the greatest joy even when the world has seemingly stopped.

Immanuel, God with us. Jesus, God in human flesh, came to us on Christmas Day all those years ago. We are not alone, you are not alone. Your Lord, the same one who created you, who molded you, who knew you before you were even born, loved you enough to come and dwell among you. In our reading from Luke 2 we see that this Christmas message of joy, the joy of Immanuel, is not only for the important folks. It isn't just for kings and priests and the elite that Jesus comes. It isn't just for the Godly and wise... it is for all men. All men, any who would call upon Him, are given this great joy.

Luke 2:10-14 read "But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on

earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.” This joy proclaimed by the angel on the Lord’s behalf is for all people. For all of us Beloved. I’ll read verse ten again for you: “But the angel said to them ‘Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people.’” Think about whom it is that is receiving this message here... it is a bunch of shepherds!

The shepherds were the most average of average people in Jesus’s day. Their vocation showed that they likely weren’t the smartest, best looking, most popular, or even necessarily righteous of the people. They were average men. If we were to take it into our day, it would be like the birth of Jesus being announced to a bunch of farmers in Dodge county, or a group of folks outside the turkey plant, or a group of teachers. These shepherds were the first to hear this message, and the message was that ALL men (with whom God is please!) have had their Savior born. To them salvation had been extended, to them hope had been given. Wrapped up in swaddling cloths, in a humble manger in the middle of nowhere, the most important person to have ever walked among us had arrived... and His salvation was for them. His salvation is for us too Beloved.

“For today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” The reason as we already stated that we celebrate Christmas Day is because it marks when our Savior showed up amongst us. We take it for granted that Jesus walked and talked and breathed and was fully human. We don’t ponder it perhaps as much as we should, that the Creator of everything, the Lord of all, the From Everlasting to Everlasting, loved us so much to come and be with us. Not in His full power and majesty of awe inspiring power did He come, but in the humble form of a baby, from which He would then grow to live the life we could not, and die on the cross in our stead. Do you need a reason to celebrate Christmas? Do you need some hope and joy this season that extends beyond some material gifts and some traditions that maybe are going undone this year? Here is your true joy, here is where you find that hope and peace. God loves you so much that He was willing to come and dwell here amongst us. Immanuel means “God with Us” and it isn’t a title for just the time Jesus is born and walks around before being crucified... it is an eternal title. He brings salvation to you, He brings eternal hope to you, He promises to take care of you and to watch over you forever if you cling to Him. The reason for joy today? Jesus has come, and in time He makes all things right and new.

If you are anything like me you are probably sick of hearing about the trials of 2020. Yes it has been hard, but we want to hear about some joy, to hear about some hope. Beloved, today on Christmas morning, there is joy that has been extended to all of us. That little baby boy who was born all those years ago was revealed to be the Savior for all who would call upon Him. That includes you. Do you need rest and peace and hope? Look to Jesus, He has come here for you. Do you need joy? Be encouraged, your Savior has arrived. We can, and should, have joy this Christmas morning even if things are different precisely because joy has been extended us through Him.

Long story short, this Christmas Day have joy. Enjoy what the Lord has blessed you with. Enjoy your time with your family and your friends in whatever capacity you can. Enjoy the

good food and traditions that you can celebrate. Most of all, enjoy the company of your Savior who came to you all those years ago knowing that if you cling to Him you are guaranteed salvation. Praise the Lord He came to us, have a Merry Christmas Beloved, let us pray,

Closing Prayer