

LARGE-PRINT

Devotions for Christmas Eve 2018

“It’s A Boy!”

North East United Methodist Church

By Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian

Sunday, December 24, 2018

Read Luke 2: 1-20.

“Down in a lowly manger the humble Christ was born, and God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn. Go, tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere; go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.”

The hymn “Go, Tell It on The Mountain” came out of the fields of the South, born from the inspiration of a slave’s Christmas, one whose life was centered on earthly pain and suffering but saw in the birth of Christ, the joy and happiness tomorrow promised.

The night Jesus was born changed everything. As D. James Kennedy writes, in his book, What If Jesus Had Never Been Born?, *“The greatest tragedy of the Christmas holiday each year is not so much its commercialization, but its trivialization. How tragic it is that people have forgotten Him to whom they owe so very much...Everything that Jesus Christ touched, He utterly transformed...He had a birthday and that birthday utterly altered the way we measure time...It’s ironic that the most vitriolic atheist writing a propagandistic letter to a friend must acknowledge Christ when he dates that letter...”*

Kennedy goes on to show how Christ’s birth impacted and changed forever civilization including the value of human life, helping the poor, the founding of America, civil liberties, science, economics, sex and family, health and medicine,

morality, art and music, and of course, the countless individual lives transformed by a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

“Go, tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere; go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.”

With the birth of Christ came hope, victory, love, faith, forgiveness, grace, comfort, gentleness, compassion, peace. And each and every person, to this day, who makes room in their heart for Christ to be born anew, experiences these many gifts of the Spirit. Suddenly, they are not alone and the vision of the future is quite different from the pain and suffering of the present.

The birth of Christ changed the world...and Christ continues to change and transform lives each and every day. Some people estimate that 20,000 individuals give their lives to Christ each day in Africa and 28,000 a day in China. As our churches are shrinking in America, they are booming around the world. We must never forget what so many around the world are discovering, that Jesus Christ is the *“King of Kings”* and has the power to transform our lives, no matter where we find ourselves. Christ has the power, as He has done with so many, to bring us *“...up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, And set [our] feet upon a rock, And establish [our] steps.”*

As we reflect today on the birth of Christ, and we imagine the scene, the manger, the animals and shepherds, Mary and Joseph...let us not forget that the babe born that night went on to change the world...and that babe can change not only our lives, but the lives of those we love. Let us *“go tell it on the mountain.”*

Monday, December 25, 2018

MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM
PASTOR DREW, DEBBIE, NATE & MATTHEW.
WE THANK GOD FOR EACH OF YOU.

WE LOVE YOU ALL!

MAY GOD BLESS YOU THIS CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR!

Read Colossians 1:15-20.

Paul sings a song of praise, thanking God for the Son, who was there at the beginning of time, is the head of the Church, and through His blood, reconciled all things to Him, bringing us an opportunity to be at peace with God. Simply take time today, this Christmas week, to give God praise. To praise Him for His Son, Jesus Christ, who *“is before all things and in Him all things consist.”*

Tuesday, December 26, 2018

Read The Scriptures Below That Go Along With The Legend Of The Candy Cane

I love the legend of the candy cane...a story to teach children about Jesus. I love that the candy cane is a Christmas candy because like Simeon's song, when he held the Christ child in the Temple, it reminds us of the rest of the story.

- The spice **peppermint** reminds us of the wise men's gift of spices to Mary and Joseph, and their worship of the Christ child. (Matthew 2:11)
- The candy is **white**, reminding us that Jesus is the Holy Son of God. He did not sin. (I John 1:7)
- The candy is **hard** like a rock reminding us that Jesus is the Solid Rock on which we can build a foundation. (Psalm 31:3 & Matthew 7: 24-27)

- The candy right-side up is in the shape of a **cane**, reminding us that Jesus is the good shepherd who cares for His sheep. (John 10:11-18)
- The candy upside-down is a “**J**” for Jesus, our Savior. (Matthew 1:21)
- The color **red** reminds us that Jesus bled and died for our sins. (John 3:16 & Revelation 1:5)
- The **stripes** remind us of Jesus’ suffering and that by His stripes we are healed. (John 19: 1-30 & Isaiah 53:5)

Give God thanks for the rest of the story, not just the miraculous birth but also Christ’s death and resurrection. Reflect on the story behind the Candy Cane and all Christ said and did to show us “the way, the truth and the life.”

Wednesday, December 27, 2018

Read James 1: 17-18; & The Scriptures That Go Along With “*The Twelve Days of Christmas*”

I also love the legend behind the song, “*The Twelve Days of Christmas*” and how it teaches us and our children the Bible story, God’s love story

- “***My True Love***” refers to God. (John 3:16 & I John 4:16)
- “***A partridge in a pear tree***” - A partridge was known as a bird willing to lay down its life for its young and therefore became an ancient symbol of Christ. The pear tree represents the cross. (John 10: 14-15 & Philippians 2: 5-8)

- ***“Two turtledoves”*** - A reminder of the sacrifice offered by Joseph and Mary at the Temple for Jesus. (Luke 2: 22, 24).
- ***“Three French Hens”*** - A reminder of the wise men and their three gifts of frankincense, myrrh and gold laid before the Christ child. (Matthew 2: 10-11)
- ***“Four Calling Birds”*** - A reference to the four Gospel writers: Matthew, Mark, Luke, & John who told the story of Jesus and called people to Him. (John 20: 30-31)
- ***“Five Golden Rings”*** - The Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, considered by the Jews to be worth more than gold. (Deuteronomy 34: 10, 12)
- ***“Six Geese A-Laying”*** - The six days of creation, as found in the book of Genesis. (Genesis 1:1, 31)
- ***“Seven Swans A Swimming”*** - The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: prophecy, service, teaching, encouraging, generosity, leadership, mercy. (Romans 12: 6-8)
- ***“Eight Maids A Milking”*** - The Beatitudes. Blessed are the poor in Spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, those persecuted for righteousness. (Matthew 5: 3-12)
- ***“Nine Ladies Dancing”*** - The nine fruits of the Holy Spirit including love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. (Galatians 5: 22-23)
- ***“Ten Lords A Leaping”*** - The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20: 3-17)

- ***“Eleven Pipers Piping”*** - The Eleven Disciples, chosen by Jesus, who remained faithful to Him. The twelfth, Judas, betrayed Him. (Mark 3: 16-19)
- ***“Twelve Drummers Drumming”*** - The twelve vital Christian beliefs as stated in the Apostle’s Creed.

Reflect on God’s story, on the many scriptures mentioned, and our core beliefs as found in the Apostle’s Creed. Give God thanks for His many, many gifts.

Thursday, December 28, 2018

Read John 3: 1-21; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ezekiel 37: 1-28; Acts 4:12.

Certainly, Charles Dickens had the transforming power of Christ in mind when he wrote, A Christmas Carol. Dickens knew of the reconciliation and redemption, the salvation and forgiveness, Paul sang about throughout his letters to the churches...a song of redemption and salvation, new life and transformation, that Ebenezer Scrooge experienced after being visited by three spirits.

In the musical “Scrooge,” Scrooge sings, *“I will start anew...I will make amends...and I will make certain...that the story ends...on a note of hope...on a strong amen...and I’ll thank the world...and remember when...I was able to begin again.”*

Take time to reflect on the message of Christmas. The message that the world, that each of us, can *“begin again.”* Like Jesus told Nicodemus, we can be born again and our relationship and future with our Creator can be secured. If you have accepted Christ, think back to that moment...the moment you gave your heart to Christ. If you have strayed away, kneel and come home. If you have never opened your heart to Him, let

Christ in, and let Him transform you...and may we tell the world when & how we were able to “*begin again.*”

Friday, December 29, 2018

Read Gal. 2:20; Luke 15:7; Matt. 19:26; Psalm 103: 2-4; Acts 1:8.

Dr. Seuss, like Dickens, knew Christ...and understood the transformation Christmas offered to the world. In *How The Grinch Stole Christmas*, he describes the Grinch’s salvation, “*He puzzled and puzzled till his puzzler was sore. Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before. Maybe Christmas, he thought... doesn't come from a store. Maybe Christmas, perhaps... means a little bit more! And what happened, then? Well, in Whoville they say - that the Grinch's small heart grew three sizes that day. And then - the true meaning of Christmas came through, and the Grinch found the strength of *ten* Grinches, plus two!*”

Christmas means a whole lot more! God is with us. Immanuel. As the Message puts John 1:14, “*The Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood.*” Again, let God grow your heart “*three sizes*” this Christmas. Open your heart and surrender to Him. God is ready to do miracles in your life.

Saturday, December 30, 2018

Read Psalm 51: 10-12; Philippians 1:6; Jer. 29:11; John 15:1-7.

As you prepare for the New Year, pray and ask God to make this a year like no other...a year when your life will be transformed like Scrooge and the Grinch...a year when you will sing like Zechariah, the angels, Mary, Simeon, Isaiah, and

Paul...a year when you will surrender your life to the One who has great plans for you. **And remember to invite someone to church tomorrow** that they may hear of this New life offered and the Savior who, with open arms, has brought it to us.

The Roman Road

- **Read Romans 3:23.** It all begins here with the recognition that we “*all fall short*” to God’s “*glorious standard.*” We have all said, “Nobody’s Perfect.” It’s true. Nobody is perfect, but God is. We are all painfully aware of our own sinful nature; we may not want to reflect on it much, but we are aware that it exists. We screw up! We “*all fall short*” and we all need a Savior.
- **Read Romans 6:23.** This is the scripture many of us don’t like to think about. Death. We are given the opportunity to choose between sin or Jesus Christ. If we choose sin, we choose death. Death is simply separation from God...a life without God, without experiencing His love and purpose for your life each and every day and throughout eternity.

Just by God’s very nature, that which is imperfect cannot be allowed in God’s presence; otherwise, God wouldn’t be perfect. Yet, God has provided us a way to come into His presence. God knew we could not make ourselves holy and perfect, righteous and just; therefore, God sacrificed His very own Son, Jesus, to atone, to take our punishment, to pay our payment, for the sins we have committed.

When we accept Jesus, we accept the gift that Jesus bought us by His blood and sacrifice. We are made clean and pure, not by what we have done, but by what Christ has

done for us. We are able, through Christ, to come into the presence of God & have the relationship with our Creator we long for.

- **Read Romans 5:8.** Yes, the penalty for our sin is death, separation from God, but God, in His loving-kindness would not allow that to happen. *“While we were still sinners.”*

The Life Application Bible says, *“These are amazing words. God sent Jesus Christ to die for us, not because we were good enough, but just because he loved us. Whenever you feel uncertain about God’s love for you, remember that he loved you even before you turned to him.”* Christ came and was willing to take our sins upon Himself. In return He gave us His righteousness, allowing us to have the choice of accepting the relationship God offers us, to come before Him. He then paid the price for our sin. Why? Because He could not bear the thought of an eternity without us.

- **Read Romans 10: 8-10.** All we have to do is accept the gift. *“For if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”*

If you haven’t invited Christ into your life, just open your heart to Him now. Don’t expect lightning bolts, but if your prayer is from the heart and you truly want Him to be a part of your life, this Christmas and New Year will be the beginning of a wonderful journey