

Seeing a Different Love

Scripture: Isaiah 9:2 – 7, Luke 2:4 – 7, and Proverbs 3:12 - 18

Advent #4 12/19/21

(Share the quote and question for this week)

There is a huge difference between the posture of waiting and the posture of celebrating. When all our energy has gone into planning, preparing, and thinking about what life will be like when our blessings come, often we do not have eyes to see its arrival!

In our reading from Isaiah, we are invited to begin celebrating because the Light has come!

The light has come and the image we get from our scripture reading from the Gospel of Luke is of a busy inn and an empty manger. Our lives parallel these two images. We are like the busy inn at Christmas. We reject Mary and Joseph because we are so busy at Christmas we ignore the true meaning of Christmas. There is probably no more hectic time than Christmas! It requires a great deal of preparation. Think of all your Christmas preparation – decorating your house, purchasing and wrapping gifts, sending Christmas cards, and entertaining friends and family! Our church calendar is full of special programs and events. And yes, there is a Christmas Eve service.

Busy is an understatement about Christmas! We miss out on the love Christmas brings!

And we are like the empty manger at Christmas. Our busyness often excludes space for the birth of Jesus in our midst, and so, Jesus is shut out and Jesus must make his entry in the cold, drafty barn where he is laid in an empty manger.

As stark as that image may be, it nonetheless represents an openness and receptivity that is laudable. Maybe we should strive to be more like the manger and less like the inn!

So, let us resolve to quiet our spirits and be receptive in a new way for the advent of Jesu! Let us begin by slowing down, stepping back from the demands, and rededicating ourselves to creating a space for God's Spirit to dwell in us in a fresh new way.

Let us step off of the merry-go-round of Advent and attend to the opportunity to welcome the Christ child into our hearts and minds. Put new straw in the feeding trough of our lives so we are a receptive home for Jesus today!

Wisdom leads to joy! The bible teaches us that – *Joyful is the person who finds wisdom, the one who gains understanding.* We find that this path - from wisdom to joy – is a biblical virtue and it never truer that at Christmas.

Indeed, *for wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will fill you with joy! God gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy to those who please him.* Wisdom will guide you down a delightful paths!

C.S. Lewis said it well when he declared – joy is the serious business of heaven! The path there however, is paved with wisdom.

My church family, I hope you agree. Let us walk with wisdom and joy in the path of our Lord!

Our calling is simple – to not let this moment pass by without seeing a new and different love. It is easy to have our heads in the clouds and think about dinner or think about our trip to see family or to think about presents under the Christmas tree. But this is the moment to KNOW the light is here!

Love will soon be born. Let us see this love!

All Advent long, we have been sticking close to the story of Christmas and we have been called to expand our vision to see a different hope, a different peace, a different joy, and now a different love.

Let us celebrate love's presence among us! Let us celebrate that Christ is born!

Mary is taking a step back. She is letting this moment of the birth of her son be a time that does not pass her by. Mary is treasuring this day and not letting it just pass by. Mary is fully present in the barn.

I wonder if the same could be said about us. Are we fully present in the miracle of Jesus' birth?

My challenge to you this Christmas is to take on the practice of Mary - Reflect, renew, and rejoice. Take on the three 'R's – REFLECT, RENEW, and REJOICE!

Find a quiet moment or two in these last few days before Christmas and turn off your TV, get off your phone, or get off your computer – and in quiet, SIMPLY BE!

The call of the Christmas season will go on for many days. There will be time in these days to act on love. But for today, let us just bask in it! Let us treasure this gift of Jesus in our hearts!

Let us pray:

Forgive us, God, for being a busy inn that has no space for you.
Make us as receptive as an empty manger to your love.

Let us seek your path for us which is filled with wisdom and joy.
And when a rocky road comes our way, may you O God point us on the
path that leads back to you.

O God, we welcome you into our hearts, our homes and to our
tables. Help us know how to love you well. Draw us out of our
surroundings to a place of quiet to worship you. Draw us to a place
where we can remember that you are love and you became love so that
we might know love more. AMEN.

To conclude this message, Marc Theriault will be singing 'O Come,
O Come Emmanuel' with two new verses written by Rev. Kevin Munroe
on love.