

December 28 Worship
Greeters- Laurie, Madisen & Tyler Dillon
Reader- Gayanne Boyer

Announcements/Joys

Time Of Quiet Meditation- *“For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own liking's, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths.”* 2 Timothy 4:3-4

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Opening Scripture- Psalm 148(page 546)

Opening Chorus- 173- His Name Is Wonderful

Responsive Call To Worship-

Leader: Good news! The Holy One, God Almighty, claims us as God's very own!

People: Rejoice in the Lord!

Leader: Good news! The times of trouble are nearly over!

People: Rejoice in the Lord, always!

Leader: Good news! God is in our midst, ready to renew us with holy love!

People: Rejoice in the Lord, always! Again we say rejoice!

Leader: Good news! Good news! The peace of the Lord will dwell in our hearts!

People: We lift up our hearts in thanksgiving. Thanks be to God!

Hymn of Praise- 42- Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise

Unison Prayer/Lord's Prayer- May none of God's wonderful works keep silence, night or morning. Bright stars, high mountains, the depths of the seas, sources of rushing rivers; may all these break into song as we sing to Father, Son and Holy Spirit. May all the angels in the heavens reply, Amen! Amen! Amen! Power, praise, honor, eternal glory to God, the only giver of grace. We pray as our Savior taught, saying...*Lord's Prayer...*

“Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”

Gloria Patri- Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. World without end. Amen, Amen.

Old Testament Scripture- Isaiah 63:7-9(page 642)

Special Music-

Gospel Scripture- Matthew 2:13-23(page 836)

Children's Time/Echo Prayer/Passing of the Peace

Hymn- 61- All Creatures Of Our God And King

New Testament Scripture- Hebrews 2:10-18(page 1045)

Message
“Now What?”

Well, it's finally over. All of the hustle and bustle, running around frantically trying to find the perfect present and making sure all the plans are perfect is done. There is a condition known as “Post Holiday Blues” and it affects more people than we may think. We spend weeks preparing for this season and when it's over we go through a sort of withdrawal almost like an addiction crisis. There is so much pressure on us to make everything just so that we cannot seem to find that perfection we seek before it's all over and somehow, we feel we have failed. Why is it that we lose sight of just what is important in this time of year that has somehow lost its true meaning and purpose?

Christmas was not meant to be the commercial circus that it has become. The Christmas that we are observing today didn't begin until the mid 1800s and has grown to something that is unrecognizable from early Christian practices. From 1659-1681, the Puritan Congregational churches even banned the celebration of Christmas altogether. We all know what the meaning of Christmas is supposed to be, so why do we get so wrapped up in the hustle and bustle?

It is almost the same with New Years. We make big plans to celebrate the end of the year and a new beginning. Why? Just like Christmas, New Years is simply another day. Christmas Eve turns to Christmas Day and New Years Eve becomes New years Day. Nothing really ends and nothing really begins, one day turns into the next and life goes on. Do we actually need to renew anything? Why is the spirit of these holidays different from the spirit we live during the rest of the year?

There is so much emphasis placed on this so called “Holiday Spirit” that we should be experiencing every single day but we only seem to speak of it during these Holy Days. Here is a quote from the great Christmas story, “A Christmas Carol.” At the end of the story, Ebenezer Scrooge says; “I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year.” The Spirit of Christmas is meant to be the spirit that guides us all, every second, minute, hour, day, week, month or year. Christ was not born so we could celebrate for a few days or weeks each year, He came to set a standard for us to live up to always and forever. His birth was not a temporary fix for this world, it is a permanent promise of salvation for all who will receive. It is not necessary to have all the trappings of the season, the gift buying, party planning, decorations and all the cultural traditions we know and love in order to keep the spirit alive within us.

Cultivate, in our lives, thankfulness and humility. Let the hectic attitude of this season jar us out of our self absorption and remind us that ultimately it is God, and not ourselves, who is responsible for any good we do and any good we enjoy. Our very salvation is a gift from God. He had to come to earth and live among us to prove to us that it is through Jesus that we are redeemed. We must learn to make peace with others. Every one of us has had challenges and conflicts in our relationship with others. The brokenness that results from these conflicts cause us to be tempted by bitterness and anger. Paying too much attention to social media only exasperates our anger and makes political and social issues a catalyst for us to hold grudges and grow bitter at those who we perceive to hold different views or opinions from us. Honor the spirit of Christmas by being a peacemaker, because that is one of the reasons Christ was born.

It is important that we pursue spiritual disciplines. It is so easy for us to say; Sure, I'll start reading my Bible more or I'll pray regularly. Maybe I'll start tomorrow. Spiritual disciplines like Bible reading, and study, prayer and group and personal worship aren't just things that we do so we can say we do them. These are a means of drawing near to God. Let Christmas remind us that we can draw near to God because He first drew near to us. It is also very important for us to invest in our community. This does not mean that we should just spend our money. Involvement in where you live allows others, who may not believe, the opportunity to get to know about what we believe. Sharing our faith through living our faith is how we get the gospel message out.

Use the Christmas Spirit to reach us to wait in hope for Christ's return. Jesus' birth in Bethlehem was not meant to be the only time we would anticipate His coming. His birth was over 2,000 years ago and before His death and resurrection He promised us that He would return. We live in a broken world and Jesus know it as well as us. The birth of Jesus showed us that we can have hope, peace, joy and

love here on earth but full reconciliation with God has yet to come. Christmas, just like Easter is not a beginning or an end, it is a continuation of the story.

All of the lessons and themes of our Holy Days are not meant to celebrate just at certain times of the year. They are to remind us, every waking moment, that when God says something or does something, we are supposed to pay attention and file the lessons away so we can experience the spirit of the holidays forever. There are 7 practices for us to work on so that we can keep the Christmas Spirit alive all year.

1. Practice Humility. We celebrate the birth of Christ, who came to earth as a baby. He left his throne to live among human beings, with their sickness, suffering, and sin. He came powerless, not as a grown man but as a baby reliant on the sound direction of loving parents, faithful to God. Christ came to the weak and weary because he was needed. What would it look like to practice this kind of humility in our own lives throughout the year? Where could we go where we do not need to be but where others need us?

2. Practice Generosity. The problems we see at Christmas carry on throughout the year, and they require our attention beyond the holidays. We can be generous with time or money. We could hang out with widows, orphans, or refugees, bring coffee and a game of checkers to the old-age home, and provide meals, groceries, or transportation to a single mother. Is this scriptural? Micah 6:8 puts it this way: “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

3. Practice Peace, One threat to our Christmas spirit is that needy people will reject our generosity, or they will become too needy. Does that sound familiar? Most people rejected Christ’s message of hope and salvation because there were parts they did not understand or that sounded too difficult. The disciples sometimes needed to hear the same lessons over and over, they struggled to put Jesus’ teaching into practice. “O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you?” (Matthew 17:17). Does this mean Jesus lacked peace? “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!” (Luke 2:14). What is this peace? It is “God’s gift of wholeness.”

4. Practice Patience. We need patience to deal with unfulfilled longings that we feel most keenly at Christmas: the desire that a relative would come home and even attend church, the loneliness of being unmarried, or when the sorrows of past holidays threaten to totally overshadow the celebration.

5. Practice Faithfulness. God’s faithfulness appears obvious amid the color, light, and merriment of Christmas. For those who can celebrate the holiday season, it seems as though God is saying “yes” everywhere. As the celebrations end and decorations are put away once more, however, we might struggle to believe that God is faithful and to be faithful to Him with our lives.

7. Practice Joy. As Christmas carols play, gifts are exchanged, wine flows, and tables groan under the weight of good food, you would think joy would be easy. There are those who love this season so much that they prepare 364 days of the year for December 25. But joy is possible at an empty table and in a lonely room. Joy is a discipline and a sacrifice, available to the hurting and the poor, the hungry and the lonely. “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2).

If we can take just a fraction of the time we put into attempting to make Christmas what it has become, we will find ourselves carrying the spirit through the entire year. Now wouldn't that feel nice? Praise Be to God. Amen.

Prayers of the People- Lord, in this holy season of prayer and song and laughter, we praise you for the great wonders you have sent us: for shining star and angel's song, for infant's cry in lowly manger. We praise you for the Word made flesh in a little Child. We behold his glory, and are bathed in its radiance. Be with us as we sing the ironies of Christmas, the incomprehensible comprehended, the poetry made hard fact, the helpless Babe who cracks the world asunder. We kneel before you: shepherds, innkeepers, wise men. Help us to rise bigger than we are. Amen.

Closing Hymn- 433- My faith Looks Up To Thee

Benediction- Let us look for Christ wherever we go Let us never stop seeking. Believing that there is a light that shines in the darkness which the darkness shall not overcome And may the love of the Creator, the joy of the Spirit and the peace of the Christ-child be with you this New Year, and evermore. Go in God's Peace. Amen.