

November 27, 2022 – First Advent Sunday

Christ's Light of Hope - Based on Romans 13:11-14

Show the video clip from the original Grinch. 1966

How the Grinch Stole Christmas is one of my all-time favourite Christmas movies. When our Children were small, I think I enjoyed it more than they did. No matter what we were doing, or where we were, we stopped to watch it. It was a “must see.”

As far as I can find out, Dr. Seuss had no formal theological training. He grew up Lutheran and apparently stayed in that denomination his entire life. But he was a humourist, not a preacher. Having said that, many of his books have insightful messages about the human spirit that he relates in story. The Grinch in my opinion is his best in this regard, and it is every bit as poignant as a gospel reading.

All that is “Contemporary Christmas,” the presents, the trees, the bobbles and lights, the Christmas feast with all the trimmings, was taken from them. They, the unfortunate Who's down in Whoville, would, the Grinch assumed, be devastated. Well, full stop, Mr. Grinch you miscalculated. The people of Whoville know Christmas was something else, something that was not purchased in a store. And on that morning when they discovered that their “material” Christmas was gone, it didn't matter. They clothed themselves in Holy Christmas light and celebrated together in the town square singing. They sang the song that, to the Grinch, was like fingernails on a blackboard. They sang of joy in the midst of disappointment.

Among us today and outside these sanctuary walls as well, there are all kinds of activists, story tellers, and kindred spirits who tell of the good news by their actions and deeds. Some of them are I expect like Dr. Seuss, but they are not necessarily learned scholars. That is the best part, because biblical stories are not meant specifically for the theologically minded.

The stories that we read and reflect on each week are meant for the curious, the seeker or the disciple. They are meant to instill in us an “aha” moment that offers us a glimpse of what Jesus' world might be like today. Paul's message to the Romans is one of those.

Wake up and let go of what is counterproductive (drunkenness, debauchery, quarreling and jealousy), are words Paul uses and live in the light; a very but universal message that is as true today and when Paul wrote it. Bathe ourselves in gentleness, kindness, forgiveness. Put on the light of Christ and be a justice seeker. Be the light of Christ for one another.

The Who's in Whoville had it right. Today we are asked if we can do that too.

I can't help but remark that the citizens from fictitious Whoville are sitting in the pews in front and behind me today. Several more of them are elsewhere in our community. They are all of you who were around here this last week sorting Christmas decorations and adorning the Sanctuary for our big Extravaganza. It was a monumental task which took place I believe, over 5 full planning days, as our sanctuary was transformed. That doesn't include the hours spent sorting through past weeks when Christmas decorations were boxed and moved offsite then back down again. And this doesn't acknowledge the phone calls, discussions, and meetings. Nor does it acknowledge all those that came to purchase something, share their smiles, and offer some good cheer. I hear the bargain bin was fully decorated too. Why am I not surprised?

And then there was all the super human work to take everything back down, in one afternoon so we could have worship together here. Astounding!

Now all of that was done primarily as a fundraiser. But the “good spirit” generated signifies something else. It signifies hope, joy, and love in the world.

I'm also thankful that Eve was here getting things ready for our 1st of Advent service and communion. I know others like Louise helped out too. The greeters, readers and servers need to be recognized as well. And apparently there was some guy baking bread as a part of the extravaganza celebration. How many loaves was that, Maurice? Enough to feed the 5,000?

I speak often, we all do, about how hopeless our world seems to have become. It is so very discouraging. What would this time in our history be like if world domination was not a goal, if leaders could instead park their ego? Could there be a better fate for the refugee, if racial discrimination were a thing of the past? What might an equal distribution of wealth among the "have" nations mean for the desperate? What might be accomplished in honouring the earth, the Creation, if we learned that economic privilege was not the goal? What might the world look like if folks with influence clothed themselves in Christ's light of Hope? We come here each Sunday offering prayers for such a thing to pass. Perhaps one day it will.

Like other visionaries of his time. Paul's plea was for his followers to be awake. "You know what time it is, he says. "How is it now the moment for you to wake from sleep." "The night is gone, and the day is near." The time he thought was for Christ to return, a time for Jesus to walk among the people again. The theological underpinning was Christ would return to save the world.

Such a physical return is something I personally have difficulty imagining. However, I do imagine Christ returning through us, through all of you. Jesus' light shines in a very hopeful way when we perform simple acts of kindness. The light works through you in your generosity, and through all you do in caring for this faith community and our broken world. And it can't but grow and flourish when we share it.

In this season of Advent when we celebrate the Hope the Christ Child brought such a long time ago, let's celebrate it now as that same hope lives in us.

Thanks for listening this Morning, Amen