

Christmas Eve 2020

The writer of Saint Luke's Gospel tells us a beautiful Christmas story, filled with adoring shepherds, sweetly singing angels, and a wonderfully peaceful moment with Mary and Joseph at the cradle which holds the Christ child. This is such an important story for Christians, one most of us heard when we were very young, and it speaks its warmth to our hearts.

The story becomes even more meaningful when we begin to understand what is happening as the story unfolds. This little baby was born in an occupied country as the subject of a fairly ruthless world power. He would become a refugee in Egypt, fleeing Herod's persecution...according to Saint Matthew's gospel...and he would live as one of the poor ones...according to the Gospel of Saint Luke.

Throughout his life, many of his own people would try to silence him and even kill him. To the Romans, who ruled his country, he was simply a disposable nuisance. If we are feeling the least bit irreligious today, or perhaps a bit cynical, we could accuse God of very bad judgment for making such lousy choices for the birth of Christ our Lord.

Which would be true, I suppose, except that God made a conscious choice to be born among us as one of the poor ones, into a very troubled, messy, chaotic and even sometimes hostile world and to share our life so that our life might become holy...touched by God, lived in the presence of God.

The birth of our Lord in Bethlehem shows us that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Not even death will be able to do that because our feet are firmly set on the path of life by the one who is for us the way of life. The birth of Christ is God's refusal to let this world snuff out the

holiness and sanctity of our life as the children of God and it is the source of the wonderful hope that is ours as the children of God. Wherever we go, whatever we do, whatever happens to us in our messy, imperfect, chaotic lives, God will be there as Emmanuel, now and forever because of this holy night in Bethlehem.

This Christmas, we once again have the joy of joining adoring shepherds and singing angels and to celebrate the greatest truth of our life ... that God is with us and we share Christ's life from here and into eternity...and nothing can take that away from us.

So rejoice this Christmas, for God is with us just as he was on that first Christmas – born into our messy, chaotic, sometime harsh and troubled world – holding us in mercy, surprising us with grace. The God of the cradle is also the God of the empty tomb, and this holy day is only the start of our wonderful life lived in the presence of God, a beginning in our life with the God who loves us with an everlasting love, now and forever. Amen.