

Becoming

Hope is Born: Part 4 “Becoming”

Rev. Cameron D St. Michael – December 24th, 2020

Christmas Eve

Readings: Isaiah 9:2-7; Luke 2:1-20

Greeting: In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The Word became flesh and made his home among us.

Lighting the Advent Candle: On Christmas Eve we light the candle of Christ’s light. “The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it.” (John 1:5 NRSV*) *The final candle is lit.*

Prayer: O almighty God, by the birth of your holy child Jesus you gave us a great light to dawn on our darkness. Grant that in his light we may see light. Bestow upon us that most excellent Christmas gift of love to all people, so that the likeness of your Son may be formed in us, and that we may have the ever brightening hope of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

Reflection: Christmas Bells (selected verses)

*I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old, familiar carols play,
and wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!
And thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along
The unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men
And in despair I bowed my head;
"There is no peace on earth," I said;
"For hate is strong,
(Henry Wadsworth Longfellow)*

*And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"
Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The Wrong shall fail,
The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men."
Till ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day,
A voice, a chime,
A chant sublime
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!*

Prayer: Oh Lord, prepare our hearts this Christmas. Bring us closer to you in all that we are. Help us to remember our Savior born into this world so that we may know your great love for us. Help us to always have hope in you. Let us become the hope that you show to use that we may be hope to the world. Bring us together in your joy and your mercy, that we may be born anew into your grace. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sermon:

Our scripture readings for today come from the New Revised Standard Version Bible. Our first reading is from Isaiah chapter 9, verses 2 through 7.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. (Isaiah 9:2-7 NRSV)*

Our other reading is from Luke, chapter 2, verses 1 through 20.

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all

who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

(Luke 2:1-20 NRSV)*

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

We celebrate Christmas, because on this day hope is born. Born in the form of a baby. Born in a fragile, little package. It's an amazing miracle. Hope delivered in a way that scared the powerful. Hope that came as a sign to those in need. A sign that we are reminded of every year at Christmas. And the thing about this hope is that it's not just a hope that we imagine. It's not a hope that we grasp before. But it is a hope that is with us. That is within us. That we prepare ourselves for this hope, for this joy, in remembering all of our joys from Christmas Past, celebrating all of the things that make this time of year special. Looking forward to all the ways that it impacts us. And even in a year that has felt like one long trial, there is still hope and joy to be found. Because the hope is with us. And for me, the miracle of Christmas is also in becoming that hope. Because as that hope is born into the world, that hope is born into us. And as it's born into us, we let ourselves become that hope. By living that promise. That the last will be first and the first will be last. That we remember that we were a people walking in great darkness that have seen a wonderful light. A light that can never be extinguished. That no matter how bad things get. Hope is here. Hope is now.

We pray that it's enough hope to carry us through. Because we need hope. Hope always in a brighter tomorrow. Hope that we can be the ones to help bring it about. Hope in the face of a child eager on Christmas morning for the joys of family. For the joys of friends. For the joy of the gifts that show they are loved. The joy of seeing the smiles on everyone's faces. And I think it's important that we never lose that hope, that we don't let it be something that comes around but once a year. That when we remember on Christmas morning that hope that Christ is born, that we remember it's a hope that will carry us through all the years. Because it's the promise that God is always there and always with us. That we may find the love of God in the faces of our friends and neighbors. We see God's mercy and grace in the face of a stranger. We find God's care and compassion in the arms of those who comfort us. Because God is with us, our Emmanuel. That no matter what may come, that no matter what happens, Christmas is the reminder of those unexpected things that can bring joy to our lives. The unexpected ways that God will always find a way into our hearts. The way that the Spirit will move us in ways we could never imagine. That we may fall on our faces, afraid, like those shepherds just going about their daily lives. But that we are reminded of the words of comfort they were given. They received the good news that they don't need to be afraid. Because great joy is there for all the people. A Savior born, to set us free. Free that we may love. Free that we may be kind. Free that we may care. Free that we may find hope in all places and in all things. Because the hope that Christ gives us never fades away. I pray that we may carry the feelings of joy that surround us. The extra spring in our step that Christmas delivers. That when we go out of our way to do

special things for people for Christmas, that it reminds us that we can do special things all the year round. That it reminds us that, though Christ was born on Christmas day, he was born into our lives forever. Born into our hearts to give us joy always. To let us be a people that can love with no limits, because we know that God loves us.

So, let us become hope. Let us become joy. Let us become love. Let us become the light that shines in every darkness. Because when we carry Christ in our hearts, the light will always shine bright. And there will always be more to give than we could ever hope to be able to give away. God gives us a reason to celebrate for all time, for every time, for anytime. Because love will always remain with us. May we be reminded of God's love and the hope that it brings in every smile, in every newborn child, in every friendly hello, in every warm greeting. And may the spirit of Christmas live in each of us always and everywhere. That we may be strength for the weak. That we may be freedom for those who are bound. That we may be joy to those in despair. That we may be peace to those in distress. That we may be comfort to the afflicted. That we may be hope in a world that so desperately needs hope. Because Christ is with us. And where we go Christ goes. And where we step Christ steps. And where we reach out a hand of kindness Christ, reaches out. So, this Christmas let us be the hope that the world needs. Let us be the love that the Father has shown us. Let us be the compassion that Christ has given us. Let us be the joy that the Holy Spirit fills us with. That we may be the hope of Christmas day, every day. Amen

Prayer for Christmas: O faithful and loving God. You showed your love to us on Christmas Day. You brought light to the darkness and hope to the hopeless. Let us find and become that hope on this day. Let us shine your light forth as we reflect your love into the world. Help us to overcome our faults and prejudices, our shortcomings and failings, our actions and inactions, and let us be renewed in your steadfast love that endures forever. Let us find the hope of Christmas and become that hope forevermore. May all who seek Christ find our Savior and Friend and be filled with the hope of his birth. Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Dismissal with Blessing: We go forth now as a people of hope. We go with the blessings of the Father, in the peace of the Son, in communion with the Holy Spirit. Merry Christmas. **Amen.**

Prayer List

Rev Charliam Renner	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Our Healthcare Workers
Angie Veach	Diane Washburn	Eric Veach	Cathy Devall
Brock McMorris	Ed & Verna Titus	Hayden Kanizer	Henry Catey
Jake Kiser	Laura Eubank Allison	Cindy Cisney	Patti Corder & Crew
Nancy Hoke	Don Wells	Tricia Adkins	Ronnie & Elaine Carlen
Don Stewart	Anne Winkler Heinrichs		Michael & Makenzie Reynolds
Ronnie Winstead	John Millsap	Annie McMorris	Dwight Parsons
Trinity Powers	Richard Durham	Kathy Hanks	Nora Werner & Family
Wayne Carrell	Gary & Mary Winterrowd	Family of Lois Woolever	Mary White
Nick Nichols	Leo Smith	Bonnie Hite	Greg Williams
Eloise Buffenmeyer	Martha Roberts	Charlie & Charlotte Baxter	Paul Schulte
Kim Hennes	Residents of the Greenup Nursing Center		

Rev Camron D St. Michael

<https://stmichael.pw>

cdstmichael@outlook.com

(316)530-3182 (call or text)

PO Box 54, Charleston IL, 61920

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Our Current Series – Hope is Born

This series is our Advent series of how Christ coming into the world fills us with hope.

November 29th – *Waiting* – Our first advent lesson is about learning to wait.

December 6th – *Preparing* – We are a people who prepare for the coming of the Lord.

December 13th – *Rejoicing* – God gives us reason to rejoice in all things.

December 20th – *Expecting* – We await what we know has come and is coming.

December 24th – *Becoming* – We not only celebrate hope, but we become it.