

## **Celebration of Christmas**

Christmas Feelings: Part 5 “Celebration of Christmas”

Rev. Cameron D St. Michael – December 24, 2023

Christmas Eve

**Readings:** Isaiah 9:2-7; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-20

**Greeting:** He will be great and called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father. He will rule over Jacob’s house forever. And there will be no end to his kingdom. Praise the Lord! (Luke 1:32-33)

**Prayer:** O God our Father, you have brought us again to the glad season when we celebrate and give thanks for the birth of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Grant that his Spirit may be born anew in our hearts this day and may we joyfully welcome him to reign over us. Open our ears that we may hear again the angelic chorus of old. Open our lips that we, too, may sing with uplifted hearts. May we celebrate our Christmas feelings as we celebrate the miracle of Christ’s birth. Glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace. Let there be goodwill to all, as we celebrate hope, peace, joy, and love 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 Common English Bible. Our first reading for today comes from Isaiah chapter 9 verses 2 through 7.

*The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. On those living in a pitch-dark land, light has dawned. You have made the nation great; you have increased its joy. They rejoiced before you as with joy at the harvest, as those who divide plunder rejoice. As on the day of Midian, you’ve shattered the yoke that burdened them, the staff on their shoulders, and the rod of their oppressor. Because every boot of the thundering warriors, and every garment rolled in blood will be burned, fuel for the fire. A child is born to us, a son is given to us, and authority will be on his shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be vast authority and endless peace for David’s throne and for his kingdom, establishing and sustaining it with justice and righteousness now and forever. The zeal of the Lord of heavenly forces will do this. (Isaiah 9:2-7 CEB+)*

Our next reading for today comes from Titus chapter 2 verses 11 through 14.

*The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people. It educates us so that we can live sensible, ethical, and godly lives right now by rejecting ungodly lives and the desires of this world. At the same time we wait for the blessed hope and the glorious appearance of our great God and savior*

*Jesus Christ. He gave himself for us in order to rescue us from every kind of lawless behavior, and cleanse a special people for himself who are eager to do good actions. (Titus 2:11-14 CEB+)*

Our last reading for today comes from Luke chapter 2 verses 1 through 20.

*In those days Caesar Augustus declared that everyone throughout the empire should be enrolled in the tax lists. This first enrollment occurred when Quirinius governed Syria. Everyone went to their own cities to be enrolled. Since Joseph belonged to David's house and family line, he went up from the city of Nazareth in Galilee to David's city, called Bethlehem, in Judea. He went to be enrolled together with Mary, who was promised to him in marriage and who was pregnant. While they were there, the time came for Mary to have her baby. She gave birth to her firstborn child, a son, wrapped him snugly, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the guestroom. Nearby shepherds were living in the fields, guarding their sheep at night. The Lord's angel stood before them, the Lord's glory shone around them, and they were terrified. The angel said, "Don't be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people. Your savior is born today in David's city. He is Christ the Lord. This is a sign for you: you will find a newborn baby wrapped snugly and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great assembly of the heavenly forces was with the angel praising God. They said, "Glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors." When the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go right now to Bethlehem and see what's happened. Let's confirm what the Lord has revealed to us." They went quickly and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. When they saw this, they reported what they had been told about this child. Everyone who heard it was amazed at what the shepherds told them. Mary committed these things to memory and considered them carefully. The shepherds returned home, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. Everything happened just as they had been told. (Luke 2:1-20 CEB+)*

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

We come together on this night to celebrate a miracle. The miracle of the birth of a child. It is this that we have been preparing for. It is this that we have been waiting for. We come together in thankfulness for the hope that the Wonderful Counselor sparks in our hearts. We come together to discover the peace that the Prince of Peace shows us. We join together in the joy that we have in our Emmanuel, our God with us. We are bound together in the love that has been shown to us in the birth of Jesus Christ, our Lord. We are here tonight to rekindle and renew our Christmas feelings so that we may carry them with us throughout the coming year. We celebrate that God has given us a gift that is greater than any other gift we could ever hope for. So let this be a celebration! Let it be with shouts of joy that we proclaim the message that was given to shepherds that watched their flocks by night. Let it be with song that we celebrate the birth of a child born and laid in a manger. Let it be with prayer that we give thanks for God's present of his presence. That we celebrate that we have an everlasting joy because of God's steadfast love and faithfulness, shown to us in the birth of Jesus Christ.

As we celebrate, let us never forget that we celebrate that God has opened the door to salvation for us. That we celebrate how immense joy is ours to have. And as such, we must remember that we are not called to be silent, but to invite others into that rest that we have.

That we share God's love with a world in need of love. That we show just how much we love our God by loving our neighbor with the spirit of Christmas. That we call out for justice and peace because we celebrate a God of justice and peace. That we lift each other up in love because our hearts know the joy that we have because God is with us. It is this celebration that we have been preparing our hearts for. It is this celebration that prepares our hearts to go forth to live a life in Christ. I pray that we can have the eagerness of those shepherds who were in the field watching their sheep. That they don't want to wait to discover this great gift but want to go right away so they can celebrate. They want to go and discover this love that God has shared with the world and to share the good news that has been given to them. That as part of that celebration they glorify and praise God for everything they have heard and seen. They set for us an example of how to celebrate the miracle of Christmas.

We have come together to celebrate this night as people who have walked in darkness and now have seen a great light. That our joy has been increased because of the birth of our Savior. We come together to celebrate this night as people who have waited for the blessed hope of Jesus Christ, bringing salvation to all people. We come together to celebrate this night the one from Bethlehem who will shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord. We come together to celebrate this night the eternal Word and how what came into being through the Word was life. We come together to celebrate this night that the darkness cannot extinguish the light of Christ. We come together to celebrate this night a child, born and laid snugly in a manger. Because this is the story of Christmas. This is the story of the celebration of Christmas feelings, the feelings that dwell in us because of the great gift that God has given us. The gift of light. The gift of hope. The gift of peace. The gift of joy. The gift of love. The gift we celebrate this night. The gift we celebrate in the new year to come. The gift that continues to give because the gift of Christmas is the gift that continuously gives. So, on this most holy night, let us celebrate this miracle that will live on in our hearts all the days of our lives. That all is calm. That all is bright. With the angels, let us sing, alleluia to our King. Let us celebrate that this night, Christ the Savior is born. Christ the Savior is born. Amen.

### **Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer for Christmas:** Heavenly Father, salvation has been given to us, a child has been born to us. Your love is born to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior. Your Spirit is upon us this very night. Help us to celebrate your son by loving and caring for each other, rejoicing in the grace that has been shown to us all. Bless us with your hope, your peace, your joy, and your love this night. Be with us now and forevermore. Amen.

**Dismissal with Blessing:** May the love of Christ our Lord rest in your hearts this evening as we go forth in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen and Merry Christmas!

## **Our Current Series – Christmas Feelings**

Our Advent and Christmas series is called “Christmas Feelings.” We will be looking at the feelings we have from Advent, Christmas, New Year’s Day, and Epiphany. Each week takes on a different feeling and how we carry them with us as we look forward to another year with Christ. Let’s celebrate our Christmas feelings!

12/3: Hope of Advent	12/10: Peace of Advent	12/17: Joy of Advent
12/24: Love of Advent	12/24: Celebration of Christmas	
12:31: Old and New Year	1/7: Gift of Christmas	

## **Prayer List**

Rev Angie Lee	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Eric Veach
Ed & Verna Titus	Henry Catey	Jake Kiser	Cindy Cisney
Tricia Adkins	Don Stewart	Ronnie Winstead	Lauren Stewart
Tom Finley	Laura Carlen	Rosie Chancellor	Chuck Hogan
Richard Durham	Kathy Hanks	Emily Blade	Tim Schnauz
Donna Carlen	Ernie Peters	Jess Shoot	Stanley Kiser
Corine Howard	Don Gilmore	Shirley Jester	Marsha Overton
Linda Carlen	Michael Nichols	Paul Cox	Taylor Waldorf
Harriet Tucker	Marlene Kincaid	Cara Dillier	Peggy Farley
Mandy Schumacher	Ann McMorris	Marci Cutts Smith	Jaydelyn Brassard
Pat Hayden Titus	Calvin St. Michael	Devona Dittamore	Nancy McElravy
Gary & Mary Winterrowd	Leo Smith	Sue & Bob Smyser	Larry Thompson
Evelyn Sue Icenogle	Greg Williams		

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