

Faithfulness

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[0 : 0 0] This is the day that the Lord has made.

We will rejoice and be glad. And if any kids want to come up and sing, they're welcome to come on down. This is the day that the Lord has made.

Let us rejoice and be glad in it. This is the day that the Lord has made.

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Welcome to Pendleton Center United Methodist Church. I'm Scott Dabb. If you are new to our church, please pick up a gift at the connection site in the back of the sanctuary after worship.

[1 : 1 9] And please fill out your friendship card to get on the mailing list, sign up for activities, and for prayers and concerns or notes for the staff. Enjoy the service.

We're glad to have you here in church this morning. There are two opportunities for ministry on our clipboards. The first one is to help with our meals up in Niagara Falls, which we appreciate all the help we can get for that.

We're also collecting toys for them, by the way. They're going to have a Christmas party a week from Thursday. So if you want to give us some little toys or something, just bring them on in and you can give them to me or give them to Gidget Hughes or just pick them up here and I'll find them.

Also, the second one is for our cantata. And it's mostly to help with setup and cleanup. But we also need cookies. So if you're just coming to the cantata and bring cookies, that would be great.

I don't know if you picked up a theme, but we use a lot of cookies this time of year. If you'd like to order poinsettias, the red flowers for Christmas, I think there's an order envelope in your bulletin today.

[2 : 1 7] Also today, we do have our loyalty slips. If you'd like to fill something out with that to make your commitment to God, we do encourage you in that effort as well. Wednesday night activities were canceled last week because of a concern we had in our town.

So I want to mention that we are going to still have our Wednesday night party a week from this Wednesday. But I just want to get that out so people know about it. It's not this week. It's a week from this Wednesday. And this week we'll have our regular Wednesday night activities.

Let's take and turn our hearts and our souls to the Lord in prayer, shall we? Dear God in heaven, we pray that your Holy Spirit will descend upon us, that you'll touch us, move us, fill us, and help us to experience your presence in this place.

We thank you, Lord, for bringing us together in worship. And we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. And it is the second week of Advent. So as we light our Advent candles this morning, hear these words from the Gospel of Luke, chapter 1, verses 26 through 38.

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David.

- [3 : 30] The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, Greetings, you who are highly favored. The Lord is with you. Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be.
- But the angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary. You have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.
- He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever.
- His kingdom will never end. How will this be, Mary asked the angel, since I am a virgin? The angel answered, The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.
- So the Holy One to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth, your relative, is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive in her sixth month.
- [4 : 37] For nothing is impossible with God. I am the Lord's servant, Mary answered. May your word to me be fulfilled. Then the angel left her.
- This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates.
- Behold the King of glory waits. The King of kings is drawing near. The Savior of the world is here.
- Fling wide the mortals of your heart. Make it a temple set apart. For earthly youths are heavens employed.
- Adorned with prayer and love and joy. Redeemer come, with us abide.
- [6 : 00] Our arms dearly we open wide. Let us thy evil presence feel. Thy grace and love will us reveal.
- Thy holy spirit lead us on. Until our glorious growth is one.
- Eternal grace, eternal grace. Be on my Savior to thy name.
- The Lord be with you. Take a moment, if you will, and greet your neighbor with the peace of the Spirit. Take a moment, if you will, and greet your neighbor with the peace of the Lord.
- Take a moment, if you will, and greet your neighbor with the peace of the Lord.
- [7 : 45] Good morning. Good morning. How are you guys doing? Getting excited about Christmas coming?
- Yep. This morning, we're going to talk about, for the next three or four weeks, we're going to talk about something that they call a creche, which is a scene of the manger where Jesus was born.
- Now, it's a little early because they're not really there yet. So there's just some shepherds and sheep wandering around in the field. But we're going to talk about Mary. But we're going to talk this morning in church about Mary. Does anybody know who Mary was?
- Who's that? The mother of Jesus. Do you know this is the most famous woman ever born? Did you know that? Mary is more famous than anybody on Disney Channel.
- Mary is more famous than anybody who won America's Got Talent. She's more famous than anybody in the whole world. And you know why? Because she gave birth to Jesus.
- [8 : 54] Yeah. That's what she did. She was Jesus' mother. And what she did was she heard from an angel. See the angel up there? So she heard from the angel that she was going to have a baby.

And she thought that that was impossible. But the angel said that it would happen and God would make it happen. And so she believed in God and it happened. And Jesus was born.

All right? Because nothing's impossible with God. Can you say that with me? Nothing's impossible with God. All right. What are you guys thinking for? You want to share something? Raise your hand. I can't leave friends.

I can't leave friends. I can't leave friends. I can't leave friends. I can't leave friends. I can't leave friends. I can't leave friends. My family and friends. My brother and sisters. My family.

Oh, don't feel papa, don't pass. All right. Let's pray, shall we? Dear Lord, we thank you for all the wonders and all the blessings you give to us.

[9 : 59] We thank you for our parents and our families and the wonderful things in our lives. Bless us always to remember that God, with him, nothing's impossible. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

You guys go to church school now if you'd like to. All the kids are welcome to go out to church school. It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas.

Isn't it gorgeous in here? I am so thankful that the church came together to decorate our church up, to just make it look gorgeous for this season, so that we can celebrate the coming of Christ into this world.

I am thankful for all the different things that are drawing us closer, the little remembrances all through our days, from hearing the wonderful songs that make us sing.

Wonderful. I'm just excited. I don't know about you. I'm excited that it's Christmas time, and it looks just so festive and gorgeous. And I'm thankful that we are gathered here together to celebrate that.

[11 : 13] We are here to celebrate God's goodness to each and every one of us. And as we reflect on just how good God is, let's return our gifts, tithes, and offerings to the Lord. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Lord, we thank you for your many blessings to us, and we give back to you a portion, a reflection of our love and our commitment. May these gifts be a reflection of you in this world.

[14 : 39] May this world turn to you, and these gifts glorify you. In Jesus' name we pray, amen. Please be seated. Prayer concerns.

I wanted to lift up Shirley Darnell, who many of you know Shirley. She is the mom of Barb Jeffords, Lou Ann Banis, Julie Beck.

She's around a lot, and she is a Miller Suburban with more fairly serious health concerns. So please keep Shirley and that family in prayer. We also know that how many people are going through feelings of turmoil and loss at this time, a lot of struggles going on, and a lot of people with health issues.

Raise your hand if you have something that you want to have prayed for, but you're not really wanting to shout it out. Lots of things on people's hearts. Lots of things going on.

So we know that God is a healer. We know that God is there for each and every one of us. Let's turn to him this morning. Gracious and loving God, we come to you this day praising your name, glorifying you, because we know you are good, and we know that you love us.

- [16 : 06] But our hearts are troubled, as we know that so many are going through difficulties. We pray that your healing touch will be upon those who are struggling physically.
- Take the pain away. Strip the disease away. Mend any brokenness and heal them, Lord, with your touch. Surround people who are hurting with supportive, loving people to lift them up.
- Encourage the families, Lord, as they go through this troubling time. Lord, we pray for those who are in mourning, who find the holidays difficult.
- We pray that your light and your Holy Spirit will fill them with your joy. Help them to see your light in the midst of the darkness.
- Help us to be a loving community, reaching out to the people who are hurting. We pray for relationships, so much brokenness, so many families and people in pain.
- [17 : 19] We pray that relationships will become strong, that your word will come between them and lift them and bind them together. May their focus be on you.
- May our relationships not be shallow, but instead grow with deep roots founded in your love. We pray for our church.
- May the children be filled with your joy and your love. And may we as a church guide them on the right path, proclaiming your word.
- We pray that you will be with our teens as they go through trying times, that they will make right and godly decisions. And we pray for our college students.
- May your hand be upon them. May our church lift up and guide our people and be a beacon of light in this community that people will know that you are here because we proclaim you and love you and it shows in everything we say and everything we do.
- [18 : 42] We pray for our world that your peace will come upon it and we trust in you for all things. Help us, Lord, in this time to lean back in loving arms, knowing you are there carrying us through.
- and we celebrate your goodness and your love. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.
- Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
- Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Damn. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.
- Thank you.
- [20 : 37] That is, to bring Christ down. Or who will descend into the deep? That is, to bring Christ up from the dead. But what does it say? The word is near you.
- It is in your mouth and in your heart. That is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim. If you declare with your mouth, Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.
- For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified. And it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. As scripture says, anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.
- There is no difference between Jew and Gentile. The same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him. For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.
- How then can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?
- [21 : 41] And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.

But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our message? Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message.

And the message is heard through the word of Christ. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. I'm dreaming of a white Christmas Just like the ones I used to know Where the treetops glisten And children listen To hear sleigh bells in the snow I'm dreaming of a white Christmas With every Christmas card I write May your days be merry and bright

And may all your Christmases be white He does a great job impersonating me, doesn't he?

Guy almost gets it right, too, you know? I always did appreciate that. White Christmas. How many of you think we're going to have a white Christmas? How many of you don't think we're going to have a white Christmas?

[23 : 41] Got to tell you, the second group has the odds. Do you know that historically, Buffalo's only had a 40% chance of getting a white Christmas? Did you know that? And with global warming, you know, It's beginning to look a lot like a green Christmas.

Yeah. Yeah. That's not really good odds, is it? You know, once in a while, kind of here and there, hit and miss, That's not something you can depend on.

Right now we're talking through the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Love. Anybody remember them? Joy. Peace. Patience. Kindness. Goodness. Faithfulness.

Gentleness. And self-control. And we're going to talk about faithfulness. Faithfulness is not a once in a while, occasionally, If it seems to be convenient kind of a thing.

It's the kind of thing that we expect to happen all the time. My car is not faithful. Faithful. The other day, it let me know. It decided it would cost me hundreds of dollars to make it faithful again.

[24 : 47] My mechanic was faithful. Although it cost me hundreds of dollars for him to be faithful. If your refrigerator works six out of seven days a week, Would that be considered a faithful refrigerator?

How many of you would be happy with that refrigerator? Want to keep that in your house? Now, we consider faithful to be all the time, every time, in every way. Faithfulness is not easy.

It takes some work. This morning, Pastor Sherry read to us the story about Mary being greeted by the angel Gabriel. And Gabriel came and talked to her and said that she was highly favored among people.

And she said, What? Not exactly. But that's kind of what she said. She's 14 years old, 15 years old, something like that. She's a young woman.

And it says that she was troubled by this greeting. I think I'd be troubled by the greeting, too. I don't know that I would consider myself highly favored. I don't know that I consider myself to have it all together.

[25 : 54] Or that I do everything right. Somehow, that seems like a pretty strong statement to be highly favored by God. I think most of us have a nagging kind of feeling that there's something wrong with us.

Am I right? Just a little something. We don't tell everybody. At least those of you who don't spill all over Facebook don't tell everybody. And those of you who do should stop. We don't want to hear.

But the truth is, we have something in our lives, often that we keep to ourselves, but that we know that we're struggling with, wrestling with, and we have a nagging feeling that somehow we're broken.

And it's because we are. In the book of Romans, in chapter 3, it says to us, everyone has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

Everyone. Not me, not you, not a couple people. Every single person falls short of the mark. So when the angel says to Mary that she's highly favored, how could she get in that state when we know even Mary, as good as she was, wasn't good enough?

[27 : 07] Faithfulness. Faithfulness is not about doing everything perfect. It's not about getting everything right. Faithfulness is about being made right by God.

In verse 9 of this passage, and a lot of you have heard this verse before, it says that if we confess with our mouth and believe in our heart, we will be saved.

Not just saved from eternal damnation or saved for eternal life, but also saved in this world from brokenness, from meaninglessness, from loneliness, from powerlessness.

And it comes to us through a heart condition. Because to convince us in our head is pretty hard to do when it's something that has to do with relationships. I don't think my way into loving my wife or loving other people in this world.

It's something that we're moved to do by our heart. Just as we're moved to follow a cause or believe in something important with our heart. It's a passion thing.

[28 : 19] It's something that we live into by who we are and by who we have. For Jesus to be born in us means that God has put his spirit in us.

That's what the word inspired means. Inspired means to have spirit put in. It means God is born and things change. In verse 10, it actually says, For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it's with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.

There's another word in there. Justified. Justified means to be made right. Remember the old electronic typewriters? They had the little button where you could justify the columns on them.

Okay? Nowadays, the computers just do that automatically for us. To make the columns perfectly straight. Some of you remember the old days when that was impossible. We couldn't do it.

We didn't have a machine to figure out that spacing. And so for us, we would have to get as close as we could. And the professors would take off the mark if we weren't making pretty papers. For some reason, I never did understand.

[29 : 25] I can't spell. Imagine the red marks on my paper. Justified. To be made right. To have the bubble on our level be exactly in the middle.

Not even within the lines. Exactly perfect. To be made okay. It's done if we believe with our heart.

It changes us. Believing, as faithfulness says to us, in something we can't prove with our head. That we can only understand with our heart.

Why do we like white Christmases? You know? I mean, what is it about that? And by the way, you know we don't want six feet of snow. We're talking about two inches, right? That's it.

Two inches. And we want it to melt away about one o'clock in the afternoon. All right? But the point is, is if you look at the world right now, it's ugly. And I'm not talking about the political scene or anything like that.

[30 : 27] Look out at the real world. I look in my backyard, which is a beautiful yard most of the year. Right now, it is plain ugly. The grass is all brown. The trees are gray.

Everything looks washed out and crummy. I don't want to look at that. God comes across and puts a blanket of white snow over the whole thing. And then the sunshine comes out.

You get up in the morning and the trees are all sparkling and the lawn looks beautiful until the dog comes along and then the dog goes away, right? But for a short time, it's beautiful.

It's perfect. And that's what God does to our life. He turns it around. He changes what we were into what he knows we can become. Some people haven't heard.

How can they hear? Unless somebody shares it with them. How can they know if they haven't had the message preached to them? I grew up in the church.

[31 : 29] In verse 12, it talks about people who are supposed to understand the faith but don't. I grew up in the church. I never really heard what Christianity was about. I didn't know what grace really was.

Now, I'm not saying it wasn't preached. I'm saying I didn't hear it. So I thought, like most Americans, that the way in which you find God's favor is by being good enough.

You do good things. You follow the rules. You do all the things that the laws tell you. Because God's like an angry dad that wants to whack us.

And so we have to do everything right or we're going to get whacked. I got to tell you the truth. I got whacked a lot as a kid by my real father.

He wasn't abusive. It was just enough to remind me that this isn't what I was supposed to do. I was an angry kid. I was selfish.

[32 : 27] I was hurtful. And I was lonely. And I was disappointed and discouraged with life. So when I looked at this thing we call God stuff, my feeling was this was impossible.

How could a guy like me, who was doing all sorts of things wrong, possibly make it? So instead of getting better, I got worse.

I got worse. So I didn't think it was wrong to break into my neighbor's house and take what I wanted or hit somebody if I wanted to hurt them or run with gangs or stay out later, do all sorts of other stuff I'm not supposed to tell you about because your kids aren't supposed to hear about my past.

I wasn't good. Even in the most general sense. So how could a guy like me ever make it?

See, faith is a powerful thing. Faith causes us to believe in something even when it seems impossible. The angel Gabriel showed up to Mary and said that she was going to get pregnant and have a child without a fellow.

[33 : 50] That's just off the charts, right? That doesn't happen. We understand that. We all get it. And so she said, I don't get it.

And the angel said, God will just make you pregnant. All right. Now, I've had some strange boyfriends with my daughter. And, you know, I know there's some odd guys out there.

But if she came home and said, I'm pregnant, it's God's baby, I'd be like, nah, I don't think so. I don't think this is going to happen. And Mary believed.

Because she believed nothing was impossible. As the angel Gabriel said, nothing is impossible with God. Christ can and will be born in us if we believe.

My life was turned around about the same age as Mary had the angel appeared to her. Somewhere around 14 or 15, I didn't turn perfect. I still was a crummy kid. I still did a lot of things wrong.

[34 : 52] But all of a sudden, my heart changed. I felt the presence of the living God being born into my life. And it turned me around 180.

I find myself going in an entirely different direction. In verse 13, it says, everyone who calls on the name of the Lord.

Will be saved. Not some people. Not the good people. Not the people who've done what they're supposed to. Not the people who are the church people. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord.

Will be saved. Myself. When I experienced that change. It transformed everything about me.

And now I know where I'm going. And I know who holds my life. And I know what my life is about. The question we all have to ask ourselves is, do we know that?

[35 : 57] Faithfulness is more than just making a statement so that we can get out of hell free. You follow? It's not like a fire insurance policy we sign with God.

Faithfulness is not just about being saved. It's about being God's. If you believe with your heart and confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, you will be saved.

You see, here's the point. That means that God, all of a sudden, becomes the one in charge. God is the one who has the right to tell us what to do.

You know? Like your wife. Yeah, you're supposed to laugh. That was a joke. Ladies, don't hit me afterwards. Right?

No, I mean like someone who can tell you what to do when you're at work, when you're at home, when you're playing, when you're out in the woods with nobody else around. That's a Lord.

[37 : 05] And somebody that you will want to do what they want you to do. You will confess with your mouth. You will proclaim with who and what you are that Jesus is Lord.

And Christians have stopped doing that largely. We've come to think that preaching is something that only pastors like I do.

It's not an everyday occurrence. But it is. You know what I really like this time of year? Love this stuff.

Don't you? I mean, my gosh, this is just like liquid. I don't know. Bless. Ew, yeah. Can you taste it?

No, you can't, but I can. You can pretend you're tasting it. I'm actually drinking it. Mmm. It's sweet.

[38 : 14] It'll hint of nutmeg. You know? And it's good. And it'll put 40 pounds on you instantly. My wife limits my intake of eggnog.

I don't like eggnog just because of Christmas. Although I do like it at Christmas and it reminds me of Christmas. The reason I really like eggnog? Because when we were kids and we got sick, our mother believed that we would get better if we drank eggnog.

Anybody else have a mother like that? It was fantastic. You know? So there you're laying on the couch. I'm sick. Mom would bring you eggnog. She'd make it up homemade, whip it all up, and serve us eggnog.

The kids who weren't sick, no, you don't get any eggnog. Just the sick kids. We'd want to get sick so we could have eggnog. Oh, it's good stuff. So every time I drink eggnog, it's like I'm getting a hug from my mother.

You know what I mean? It's like getting a hug from my mother. Now, I've got to tell you the truth. Our faith is like that.

[39 : 28] Every time you come to church and the pastor says the words, in the name of Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. It's like you've got a hug from God.

He says, you know, all the brokenness, all the sickness, all the pain, all the hurt, all the troubles, all the difficulties you've had, they're gone. They're gone. Like drinking a big glass of eggnog.

Makes you feel good. Now, that's a story. I tell stories. You can tell stories, too. See, we think preaching is like standing in front of a grocery store yelling at people that, you know, they're going to hell or something.

Preaching isn't that. Preaching that God wants us to do is just to live our lives in a way in which God becomes a regular part of what we do, where we tell the story in how we live.

So when my wife and I go to wrap up Christmas gifts, we look long and far to find Christian wrapping paper. It's not easy to find, by the way. You want a good idea for an online business?

[40 : 37] Sell Christian wrapping paper. Because nowadays you can find Snoopy anywhere you look, and you can find Santa Claus everywhere. But try and find one with Jesus on it.

Used to be everywhere. But it's disappearing. Just as Jesus is slowly disappearing from our culture and the world around us. And a lot of people don't even know who he is.

Do you have a crush in your house? It's okay that you put up Christmas trees and ornaments and Snoopy and a big balloon on the front lawn.

That's okay. I don't mind that. I told you last week. That's God's way of getting the whole world to celebrate his son's birthday. That's okay. We got people who are completely atheists going around saying, Merry Christmas to one another.

You know, it's God's way of getting his son's birthday to be celebrated. But in your house, in a Christian home, is there something like this where you tell the children what the story is about?

[41 : 40] I've had some parents come to me and say, You know, you've messed up my crush scene because my kids keep taking the wise men and sticking them halfway across the room. The kids are getting it, right?

Because the kings weren't there. I know that messes with you. They weren't there. They were still traveling. So we put them across the room, too. But people come into your home.

You don't even have to say a thing about Jesus. Just have that scene sitting out there. And they're going to go, Why do you have little people in your house? Let me tell you about those people.

Do you see how that works? And we can share the story of Jesus such a simple way. And if we don't, they're not going to hear the message.

And that includes our children, by the way. Too often we're going to tell them that football's more important than Sunday school. Or that yard work's more important than worship.

[42 : 42] Or that money's more important than having Jesus in their lives. Or having a successful good job will make their world go round.

But none of those things will buy one minute and eternal life. Or will change their soul. Or will make their life bright like snow.

You see, the messages we're giving, they're not bad messages. We're just missing the one that matters the most. In the book of Deuteronomy, it says to us, Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds.

Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children. Talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down, and when you get up.

Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates, so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land the Lord swore to give your answers. As many as the days that the heavens are above the earth.

[43 : 48] When we give our children this blessing, we give them the opportunity to change their lives. And in the process, we can change the whole world.

See, the trouble is, is our culture, our society, has started to live for all kinds of things. They're not bad. They just don't matter. I was reading the obituaries this week.

I always read them now to make sure I'm not in there, but also to make sure you're not in there, you know? And this week, there was a big one. I can't imagine who paid for this.

It was huge. And you know what it was? It was in there because this guy was a guy who starred in the commercial with Alka-Seltzer that went pop, pop, fizz, fizz.

Oh, what a relief it is. That's what I want my obituary to be about. I could go pop, pop, fizz, fizz. Oh, what a relief it is. Really? Really?

[44 : 48] Your whole life was based on you were in a commercial? There's nothing wrong with being in a commercial. There's nothing wrong with making a commercial.

There's nothing wrong with having a good job. I don't want my life to be known to everybody in the world as the guy who went pop, pop, fizz, fizz.

Oh, what a relief it is. Oh, yeah. I mean to the Lord. We've got to understand.

We're on a mission from God. We're on a mission from God. And if the Blues Brothers can be on a mission from God, we can be on a mission from God. Amen? Amen? If a couple of guys in bad suits who don't know a thing about what we know about realize that the important thing in life is to have a mission from God, certainly the people who call themselves Christians after the name of our Lord, Jesus, should be on a mission from God.

Amen? We're on a mission from God. The mission of the day. And faithfulness is not just about getting something from us. Faithfulness is about serving the real Lord of the universe because that's what can change things.

[46 : 11] In verse 15 it says, How can people understand unless somebody preaches to them? And how can they preach unless they're sent?

How beautiful are the feet of those who bring the good news. People work hard to have beautiful feet. Not men so much, but women do, right? They go to these places where they stick their feet in some tub of water and the women, what do they call those things?

A pedicure? A pedicure, right? And they polish them all up. You want beautiful feet? Preach the good news. This is the real boots on the ground is to be the ones who are going to change the world by where they go, what they say, and how they live.

And the world is changing. The problem is the world is not changing the right way for our folk. You know, in our country, it seems as if everything about God we're pushing away.

Everything about Christianity we're diminishing. And by the way, have you noticed that it feels like the blessing that the United States used to have is also starting to fade?

[47 : 24] Do you want to know where Christianity is growing? Go to Russia. China. They're all going to church these days. Or how about this one? China. You know that in a few years, China is going to have more Christians than the United States.

What's that going to mean if there are 500 Christians in China and there's only a handful here in the United States and we as Christians are supposed to serve God?

Who are we supposed to be faithful to? See, I want our world to be going in the right direction. The blessings of God go to the people who are turning to God.

Not the people who are turning away from God, turning their back on God, embarrassed by God, ashamed of God, won't speak about God, won't say a thing about God, feel they have to apologize because they even have God in their lives.

Do you have a different behavior? When you come to church, then when you go out and do the rest of your life, do you show God who and what you are and what you do?

[48 : 35] In verse 11, it says, God will never put us to shame. But what if we are ashamed of him? Mary wasn't ashamed.

Imagine what this young woman was being asked to do. She was being asked to tell people that as a single mother, she was pregnant and the child was God's.

Now, do you know how many people were not going to believe what she said? But she believed it. She believed the impossible word of God. And Mary is not only the most famous woman in history, she's the most blessed woman of all history because she believed in God.

Even though it meant people were going to be talking about her, saying things about her, even accusing her of things that weren't true. If you confess with your mouth, not just believe it in your heart and keep it in the secret of your room or the sanctuary of God, but confess it to the world.

God will not put you to shame. And we don't want God to be ashamed of us on the day of judgment when he opens up the books and doesn't find our name in the book of life.

[49 : 58] I know where I'm going. I know who holds my life. I want to make sure that everyone I love and everyone I meet does as well.

And people will say, but that's hard. I don't know how to do it. I don't even know where to start. Just start easily. I was walking along the shores of Silver Lake one day and there was a woman sitting on the bank.

And we started talking about the weeds out in the water. And she said, you know, you could drown in those weeds. You get all tangled up and you drown. I said, well, that's okay.

I'll go to Gloria. She looked at me and she said, how do you know that? And I told her. And I told her. And I shared with her how I knew that.

She asked me. I told her. I don't know the woman. I don't know who she was. I don't know where she came from and I don't know where she went. But I know she heard what I knew.

[50 : 59] People need to hear the story. Because they don't know. They don't know. It's not like when I was coming up and you could assume everybody would hear about Jesus.

They don't know. They have no idea. They think Christians are just mean, judgmental, self-righteous, nasty people. So not true.

But they don't know. Because the people of God aren't telling them. So they wander around, especially at this time of year, trying to find meaning and dancing snowmen and reindeers with bright red noses and flying elves or by finding that perfect Christmas tree until they're disappointed when, well, it doesn't quite work out.

I guess you were right, Linus. I shouldn't have picked this little tree. Everything I do turns into a disaster. I guess I really don't know what Christmas is all about.

Isn't there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about? Sure, Charlie Brown. I can tell you what Christmas is all about. Lights, please.

[52 : 15] And there were in the same country shepherds, abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them.

And the glory of the Lord showed round about them. And they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not. For behold, I bring you tidings of great joy, which will be to all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you. Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, 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, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

That's what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown. That's what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown.

[53 : 22] It's very simple. A cartoon kid with a blanket can tell you. Seems that we should be able to share that story too. Of a God that changes and transforms our lives.

Of a God who takes the brokenness and the pain away. of a God who every day is willing to give us a hug and sweeten up our lives.

First thing Mary did was go to tell Elizabeth. Go and tell Elizabeth. You know what happened to me? It's unbelievable! She wanted to share the good news.

Verse 14 says to us, How will people know if no one tells them? How can they call on the Lord? If no one shares with them? Too many people have been condemned.

Including people you love and know. Because we're not willing to share the good news. Maybe there's people right here today who need to say, Today, I'm going to call on the name of the Lord and believe.

[54 : 29] I don't want to live in that brokenness and that pain and that difficulty. See, we have the answer. I've heard of the city Aleppo where people are getting killed and bombed.

It's horrible, right? And could you imagine if you had a tunnel to get these people safely out of the city and you know where it was and everybody in the city could be saved but you're not going to tell them just in case something goes wrong.

You don't want to be playing. Could you imagine that? You'd be like the kid on the video game who knows all the little secret little doors and things but doesn't tell anybody. We know the answer.

We know the gospel. We have the grace that the world is desperately looking for. Too many people haven't heard it.

Some of you are doing it. I know that. Out on the streets of Buffalo in Niagara Falls in nursing homes in retirement communities with their friends and at work. They're sharing the good news because it changes us and it can change them.

[55 : 35] And God will have the victory. Jesus will be victorious. There's no question about that. The only question is whether we'll be with him or not.

And will the people we love be with them? And with him or not? God has decided to bless the world if we let his son be born in him.

I see it in some young people alive to God on fire for God seeking after God looking for where they can get closer to God. And then I see other ones who wander around totally lost mostly because their parents don't show them what they're supposed to be.

God can change us. Totally change us. He turned my hurt into healing. He turned my anger into hope.

My fear into strength. He turned my loneliness into comfort. My brokenness into confidence. He took a guy who was headed directly to jail.

[56 : 44] Do not pass code. turn them around so that I could live a life that has some value. Nothing is impossible with God.

If God can change someone like me certainly he can do good stuff with you and with the people around you. In the book of Joel we read you will know that I'm in Israel that I am the Lord your God and that there's no other.

Never again will my people be shamed. And afterward I'll pour out my spirit on all people. Your sons your daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams your young men will see visions.

Even on my servants both men and women I'll pour out my spirit in those days. I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth. God is going to make incredible things happen.

It's occurring around the world. The world is turning to Christ all over the world. We need to be a part of that. We need to be the ones who are sharing that.

[57 : 53] We need to be the ones that are hearing that. We need to be the ones that are living that. You want to change the world. Don't worry about politics. Don't worry about business. Don't worry about any of these things the way we change the world is by changing the hearts of the people around us.

That will change the world. You hear what I hear? You see what I see? You know what I know if you do. God bless you.

Bless you. Set the night wind to the little land Do you see what I see?

Do you see what I see? Way up in the sky, little land Do you see what I see? Do you see what I see?

A star, a star, dancing in the night With a tail as big as a flood With a tail as big as a flood Set the little land Do you hear what I see?

[59 : 12] Do you hear what I hear? Do you hear what I hear? Do you hear what I hear? Linging through the sky, shepherd boy Do you hear what I hear?

Do you hear what I hear? A star, a star, a star, I am one of the dreams With a voice As big as a sea With a voice As big as a sea Sing the ship and war To the mighty king Do you know what I know?

Do you know what I know? In your proudest war, mighty king Do you know what I know? Oh, I'm a child, a child Shivers in the cold Let us bring him silver and gold Let us bring him silver and gold Set the king to the middle everywhere Listen to what I say Listen to what I say Wait for me The people everywhere Listen to what I say Listen to what I say Listen to what I say A child, a child Sleeping in the night He will bring us Goodness and light He will bring us

Good death and light He will bring us Good death and light Good death and light Thank you.

Thank you.

[62 : 07] Thank you. Thank you.

My soul, my soul, magnifies the Lord, my soul, magnifies the Lord.

He has done great things for me, great things for me. He has done great things for me. There will be no end. He has done great things for me.

He has done great things for me. He shall be on David's home. He shall be on this day of our wonderful counselor.

Everlasting Father. Wonderful counselor.

[64 : 02] He shall be on this day of my soul. He shall be on this day of my soul. My soul, my soul, magnifies the Lord.

He has done great things for me. He has done great things for me. My soul, my soul, magnifies the Lord, my soul, magnifies the Lord.

He has done great things for me. Great things for me. Great things for me.

Are you ready for a hug from God? Pray with me, will you? Dear God in heaven, I have sinned. You know what's wrong with me.

You know even the deep stuff that's wrong with me. Forgive me, Lord. Help me to repent. To change my direction.

[65 : 25] Be born in me. Let your spirit inspire me. And fill me. And fill me. That I might be a blessing.

And part of your blessing. For it's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. In the name of Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven.

Glory to God. Amen. It's just like a hug from God. Oh, that's good. You can't sing with that stuff. Oh, come all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant.

Oh, come all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant. Oh, come all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant. Oh, come all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant. Oh, come all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant.

Oh, come ye, oh, come ye to heaven. Oh, come all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant. Oh, come all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant.

[66 : 25] Oh, come ye, oh, come ye to heaven. Oh, come ye, oh, come ye to heaven. Oh, come and behold him, born the king of angels. Oh, come let us adore him. Oh, come let us adore him.

Oh, come let us adore him.

Oh, come let us adore him. Oh, come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

True God of true God, blind from thine eternal, lo he shines at the earth, virgin's womb.

Son of the Father, begotten and prepared, O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

[67 : 50] Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation, O sing, are ye jencient and heaven above.

Glory to God of glory in the high, O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

Child, for us sinners, for an in the manger, We would embrace thee, O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

God invites us to celebrate in his love.

There's an open table welcoming, calling each and every one of us to take time and remember and celebrate how God gave himself for us because he loves us so much.

[69 : 48] And so I welcome you to celebrate with me. The Lord be with you. Lift up your hearts. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere, to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

You formed us in your image and breathed into us the breath of life. When we turned away and our love failed, your love remained steadfast.

You delivered us from captivity, made covenant to be our sovereign God and spoke to us through the prophets. And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn.

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.

[70 : 54] Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest. Holy are you and blessed is your Son, Jesus Christ. Your Spirit anointed him to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to announce that the time had come when you would save your people.

He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and ate with sinners. By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection, you gave birth to your church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit.

When the Lord Jesus ascended, he promised to be with us always in the power of your Word and Holy Spirit. On the night in which Jesus gave himself up for us, he took the bread, and he gave thanks to you, Father Almighty, and he broke the bread, and he said, this is my body, broken, given for you.

eat of this often, remembering me. And when the supper was over, he took the cup, and he gave thanks to you, and he said, this is the blood of the new covenant poured out for you, poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

drink of this often, remembering me. And so, in remembrance of these, your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice in union with Christ's offering for us as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

[73 : 04] Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again. Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine.

Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by this blood. By your Spirit, make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet.

Through your Son, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit and your Holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and forever. Amen.

And now, as confident children of God, let us pray the prayer that he taught us, saying, 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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

[74 : 17] And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever.

Amen. Will those who are serving, please come forward. Amen. Amen. Amen.

. Amen. . Amen. . Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[76 : 17] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[79 : 40] Thank you. Thank you. for you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Christ was born to say.

[82 : 16] It's not pop, pop, fizz, fizz.

Oh, what a relief it is. Although after drinking all that eggnog, I could probably use some right now. I hope God extends that dash for all eternity for you and fills it with wonder and joy and possibilities and dreams and transformation.

As God turns your heart around through your faithfulness. Go in his peace. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.