

December 20, 2015

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Date: 20 December 2015

Preacher: Pastor Tom Kraft

[0 : 0 0] This is the day that the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it. If any of the kids want to come up and sing, they're welcome to come join us. 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. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

This is the day that the Lord has made. Hi, welcome to our church. I'm Mike Maciejewski.

And I'm Julie. Please fill out your friendship card to get on the mailing list, to sign up for any activities, any prayers or concerns, and any notes you want to send for the staff. And if you're new to our church, please be sure and pick up a gift that we have for you in the back of the church at the Connection site after worship.

Thank you for coming today, and welcome to Pendleton Center Church. Thank you.

[1 : 5 2] Also, if you don't have a family ornament on the tree, we usually invite our congregation to write a family name on one of the ornaments. There's a marker inside that basket, so feel free to just mark one of the ornaments and hang it on the tree.

And last of all, if you use offering envelopes, they're out in Mission Alley, and please pick them up so that we can save a few dollars on mailing them out. All right, let's turn our hearts to the Lord in prayer, shall we?

Dear God, we do thank you for this day, and we pray special blessings on us that we might just experience the wonder of God born into this place. Touch our lives. Touch our hearts. Touch us in all that we are.

For it's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. And this is the fourth week of the season of Advent, so as we light our Advent candles, hear these words from the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 2.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

[2 : 5 3] But the angel said to them, Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord.

This will be a sign to you. You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.

When the angel had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about. So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and the baby who was lying in the manger.

When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.

The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

[4 : 00] I'd like to invite you, if you're able to stand, as we're going to sing together, Angels from the Realms of Glory. Angels from the Realms of Glory, When you're flying, when you're flying, or all the earth.

In the same creation story, now proclaim Messiah's glory. Call and worship, call and worship, worship Christ the newborn King.

Shepherds in the fields of Biding, watching on your cross by night. God with us is now residing, thunder shines the infant light.

Bow and worship, bow and worship, worship Christ the newborn King. Sages, with your contemplation, brighter vision, beam afar.

Seek the great desire from patience, hear and see His little star. Call and worship, call and worship, worship Christ the newborn King.

[5 : 52] Sing, sing for me, sing for me, watching long in hope and fear. Suddenly, the Lord descending, in His temple shall appear.

Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ the newborn King. The Lord be with you.

Take a moment if you will and greet your neighbor with the peace of the Spirit. Thanks, Pastor. I'd like to invite the kids to come up and put an ornament on the tree now if they'd like to.

If any of the kids want to put an ornament on the tree. Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ the newborn King. And when you're done with your ornament, come on right up over here.

I fell down. I fell down. I fell down. I fell down.

[7 : 19] I fell down. I fell down.

Lots of people putting ornaments on the trees, right? I fell down. What? You said what? Oh, yes, I did. Yeah, we did that in the other room, didn't we?

How are you guys doing this morning? Good. Excited about Christmas? Let's see, it's 13 days away, right?

It's not? How many days is it? Five? Well, you guys got that down good, don't you? Ah, you guys got all kinds of stuff going on.

What do you think these are? Does anybody know? What are they? Yep, go ahead. Well, they're animals, but what are the people? They're shepherds. Yeah, they're shepherds.

[8 : 29] They take care of sheep. See them? The sheep and the goats? Yeah. And you know what? On the day that Jesus was born, nobody noticed. Only these guys. You know why they noticed?

Because they were watching. See, if you want to see special things, you've got to be watching. But if you've got all your time with your head in a TV set or on video games or something, you won't see anything, right?

So sometimes you've got to look up and watch, right? And then you'll see great things happen. God will do wonderful things in your life. What are you thankful for this morning? You want to share something? My mom and dad.

Mom, dad, and sister. My mom and dad. My sister. My brother.

My sister. Friends and family. Friends. The earth. My mom and dad and my cousin.

[9 : 31] My family. My dad and my mom. Friends and family. My mom and dad. All right.

Let's pray. Dear Lord, we thank you for our moms, our dads, our parents, wonderful things in our life. Help us always to be watching for the blessings you give to us. It's in Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Okay, you guys go out to church school. All the kids are welcome. Go out to church school now. Amen. Good morning.

Isn't it a beautiful day to gather in the presence of the Lord. Let's bring our gifts, tithes, and offerings before him. And remember that it's an act of worship.

Christmas, it's in Christmas.

[10 : 40] Christmas, it's in your heart. Somewhere deep inside you.

It's where Christmas really starts. Christmas, it's in your heart. So if all are you, Jesus, you'll discover when you do.

That it's Christmas, we'll be Christmas for you. Jesus' wings walk like a winter fire.

A lion's like a candle's glove. Fucking perfect impression. Jesus' feet Ambition, it's on the net of Jesus, and he says, Jesus waking up, as his son said there's gonna be promised going wi■ay.

We'll welcome Him with the song of joy, and when He comes, we'll know.

[12 : 00] Christmas isn't Christmas, till it happens in your heart.

Somewhere deep inside you, is where Christmas will be started. So give your heart to Jesus, you'll be so far when you do.

And it's Christmas, really Christmas. Christmas, really Christmas for you.

Dear Heavenly Father, we do give you thanks and praise for this day, and for all the gifts that you've poured out into your life, into our lives. We thank you for the opportunity to give of those gifts to you.

We lift them up before you and ask that you would bless them. Give us wisdom to know how to best use them for the furtherance of your kingdom. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

[13 : 27] Please be seated. So I'm wondering, after hearing the frogs sing for us, do we need anything else today?

But God has so much more for us. I just want to, I feel like I want to ask, have you given your heart to Jesus? Have you given your heart to Jesus this Christmas?

Wow. We have some joys. One wonderful joy. Victoria James and Joshua Fuller were married yesterday. And isn't that a blessing?

Isn't that a blessing? Along with that blessing and, of course, all of the joys and the blessings that are in your hearts today that you're rejoicing before God about, we do have some concerns.

Diana Fritz is continuing with health concerns. We want to keep her in our prayers. Bev Cornelius suffered a stroke, and she is in rehab in Newfaint. And Katie Stevens is in rehab in Lockport.

[14 : 35] She fell and broke her arm. And so we want to keep her in our prayers as well. With these concerns and those in your hearts and all of our joys, let's turn to our Lord who hears and answers our prayers.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Our Heavenly Father, we give you thanks and praise this day. We are so grateful to have the privilege of coming before you, of knowing that you hear us, that you answer us, that you are with us in the midst of everything that we go through in this life.

how grateful we are. We pray, Lord God, for all of those folks who are sick and in need of healing. We pray that you would touch them from the tops of their heads to the soles of their feet and bring healing into their spirits and their souls and their bodies, Lord God.

That you would restore them and strengthen their faith. Draw them to yourself, Lord. For the greatest healing of all is to find you and to be saved.

[16 : 05] To be healed from our sin. Lord, we pray for all those who care for them, those family members and also any medical professionals that they're working with.

We pray for wisdom for them. We ask in Jesus' name that what they have to offer their patients, those loved ones in their care, would come from you.

That it would be beyond anything that they know in their own natural understanding and knowledge and learning. We ask that you would work through them to bring that healing.

We pray, Lord, at this time for those who are grieving losses. Lord, we do feel those losses so much more strongly.

We pray for them. We pray for them. We pray for them. We pray for them. We pray for them. We pray for them. Whether it's been a long, long time since a loved one has gone from us or whether it's only a short time.

[17 : 15] Lord, we ask that you would bring comfort. Lord, knowing that as you bring all kinds of memories of happy and wonderful and loving things that were in those relationships, things that were in those relationships that were in us, that you give us hope of seeing those relationships fulfilled again in you.

this time of Advent, we remember that Jesus came to us, that Jesus was here on the earth. And that's a wonderful thing.

But more than that, so much more than that, we remember that you are coming back again. Jesus is returning.

And we will go home to be with him. And we will have the love that we have for our loved ones who are gone before us restored.

Give us this hope in this Advent season, Lord. Give us this hope as we approach Christmas. Lord, we pray also in Jesus' name that you would make us to be your people out in the world.

[18 : 40] Lord, in these last few days before we celebrate Christmas Day, we're going to be busy, we're going to be trying to get everything done.

Lord, we know that you are with us through all of these times, Lord, through all of these moments of the day. But we pray in Jesus' name that people would see you in us, that they wouldn't see our hurriedness, that they wouldn't see our frustration, that they wouldn't see those things in us that make us just another one of the crowd.

We pray, Lord, that as we encounter your people, that as we encounter those who need to see Jesus for the first time, as we see those and encounter those who need to be reminded of who you are and that you came, that they would see you through us.

Be with us, Lord, as we hear from your word. Give us eyes to see and ears to hear and hearts and minds to understand and receive all that you have for us today, transforming us into those people that your love can shine through.

Be with Pastor Tom and anoint him to deliver the message that you have given him for us today. Let it be a blessing to him and a blessing to us.

[20 : 12] And Lord, make all of our worship this morning to be a blessing to you. And it's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Good morning.

The scripture this morning is from the Gospel of Luke, chapter 12, verses 35 through 40. Be dressed, ready for service, and keep your lamps burning, like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks, they can immediately open the door for him.

It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. Truly, I tell you, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table, and will come and wait on them.

It will be good for the servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the middle of the night or toward daybreak. But understand this, if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into.

You must also be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Can you imagine what it was like in Bethlehem back then?

[21 : 32] I mean, Caesar Augustus had issued a decree that all the world should be enrolled. What that really means is they want to count them. You know why governments count people? So they can tax people.

That's why they count them, to find out how much tax they can get from different regions and places. So everyone went back to their hometown, which is a strange way to do the count.

And Bethlehem was a hometown claimed by a lot of people, because it was called the city of David, where David had come from. It wasn't really a city, though.

It was a little dusty town. And all these people descended on it. They're all over the place. You can imagine what the residents of Bethlehem felt like. People coming and going everywhere to be counted by the Romans that were there.

And in the meantime, of course, there was no place to stay. A lot of these people traveled quite a bit of distance. So, you know, people opened their houses, tried to find a space. The inn, which was probably a house with one, maybe two extra rooms.

[22 : 32] It wasn't like a holiday inn type thing. You know, the inn was full. They probably had people sleeping in the living room. You know, they were overbooking the place, because that's what you did in the holiday rush season like this.

And along comes Mary and Joseph. And she's pregnant. And they open up the door, and it's like, really? Lady, we have no place for you. I'll tell you what.

You can sleep out in the barn. At least you'll be dry tonight. So Mary goes out in the barn. And in the meantime, everybody's been so busy that when nightfall came, you could almost see them falling into their beds.

They've got the doors shut. They've got window shutters closed, because there's a lot of strangers in town, you know. And so they go to sleep. And the glory of the Lord appeared.

And the angel proclaimed the birth of a child in a little stable out behind the inn. And they all missed it. They slept through it.

[23 : 32] The greatest event that ever occurred in the history of humanity, right in their own town. And they missed it.

You can almost hear people talking in the morning, can't you? Did you hear about it? Did you hear about the baby being born out in the stable back there? Did you hear where the shepherds, they were talking about something about angels appearing?

And we missed it. We got it wrong. Wrong timing. Just not paying attention.

No CNN to report on it. It just... Jesus is coming. We talk about it at Christmastime because he came in Bethlehem in that stable.

But he's coming into our hearts now, right here and at this point in our lives. And he's coming in glory to reclaim all of creation and start it all new, which I am thankful for.

[24 : 35] We've messed this one up. Will we be ready? Will we be watching? Will we see it? It says he'll come like a thief in the night when nobody's expecting him.

Out at our cottage, right next to the front door, there's a parking space. And, you know, it's really convenient, especially when my mother, who had polio and walked with crutches, needed to get out of the car and just go right in without steps.

We had parking down below the cottage, you know, but you had to walk up the hill, through the yard, and up the steps. And this was so much more convenient. But Bob parked there.

Bob was our neighbor. Our neighbor to this side of the house, looking at it. And Bob had always parked there. And we would come out, and Bob lived in Rochester, so he wasn't there when we showed up, so we'd park, you know, and we'd unload the car.

And if we left the car there, somewhere along the line, Bob's brother-in-law, who lived down the hill, would come up the hill and say, Bob's coming out! Bob's coming out! You gotta move the car!

[25 : 45] Bob's coming out! And so we'd go out and move the car to the other part of our property to Bob to park his car.

But we never knew when he was coming. And we don't know when Jesus is coming. They don't give us a time. In fact, they say it would be so unexpected that it'll be the same as like a thief in the middle of the night.

We just won't know. But what we do know is that it's something that God's people should embrace. We should be excited about this. It says that the servants in this house were waiting expectantly for the master return from a wedding banquet.

They were just waiting with excitement. Anybody hear of our own dog? It's like that, you know? When the dog is just by themselves at home, they're like this.

No matter what you might see in a cartoon or movie, they do nothing. As soon as they hear somebody coming to the door, it's like, you know, if your kids are getting off the bus and they're three blocks away, that dog can hear the bus and starts running and starts, oh, oh, they're coming!

[27 : 00] Oh, oh, oh, they're coming! They're coming! They're coming! That's how we're supposed to be about Jesus coming. Excited that he's at the door. In the book of Revelations, it says, here I am, I stand at the door and knock.

If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person and they with me. It says that they have the door, they open it for him, the master comes in.

Do you hear God knocking at the door of your heart? Do you hear God knocking and wanting to come in? Or are you distracted and busy with so many things that you miss it?

After Christmas in the month of January and February, I'm going to preach about the holiday church where we've sort of forgotten God. We remember him this time of year.

People come to church. We remember him at baptisms and weddings and funerals and confirmation and such. But the rest of the time of year, we sort of forget God.

[28 : 09] It's not that we hate God or we turn our back on God. We just forget him. The church that Jesus wrote that letter to about opening the door was Laodicea.

And his complaint about them is that they were lukewarm. They weren't just completely cold, but they weren't hot either. They were just sort of, kind of, believers in God.

And God said, I'm going to spit them out of my mouth. See, the truth is, there is, there is a good place to go at the end and there's a bad place.

We've gotten this notion that it really doesn't matter. We can do whatever and we all end up in something good. It's not true. I even hear people joke and say, oh yeah, well, it's okay. I'd rather go to hell all my friends will be there.

No, you don't want to go to hell. Hell is hell. You get it? Hell is hell. It's bad. That's why they call it hell. Because it's bad. You don't want to go there.

[29 : 08] You want to go to the good place. When God comes, you want to be ready. Because God is planning to do something great. It says in the story, it's like a guy coming home from a wedding.

He's in a good mood. I went to a wedding last night. And you come home and you're smiling. It's a nice time. We used to sit in our beds when we were kids. On Monday night, waiting.

We weren't sure what would happen. Because my father would go bowling on Monday night. If my father's bowling team lost, we would just stay in bed sleeping.

But if he won, it didn't matter if it was 11, 12 o'clock at night. Doesn't matter that we're just kids.

All of a sudden, my father would come bursting into the house. I got subs! Submarine sandwiches. Royals from Linettas and Cheek to Waga. And we'd all come rushing down from our bedrooms.

[30 : 08] And we'd have a party at 11, 30 at night. I'm sure my mother's going, really, really, really? I guess I'm going to get to sleep. But we were waiting, anticipating, never knowing when.

Our father was going to come home and throw a party. Our heavenly father is planning a huge, wonderful celebration. And we're invited.

But are we living in such a way that we're God's people? And that we're going to go to that party? It says in here that the people were dressed, they had their lamps lit, and they were expecting the master to return.

Having our lamp lit is an important thing. We talked about it two or three weeks ago when we talked about the ten virgins. About the lamp being like the Holy Spirit of God, the fire within us.

People talk all the time about religion. But religion has no power. The question is, do we know Jesus? Because if you just know about Jesus, there's no power in that.

[31 : 21] Any argument probably could cause you to doubt what you believe in. But if you know him, if he's a part of your life, it doesn't matter what anyone says, you're not going to let go of someone you know and care about and love.

The one that comes to our heart now. Can you imagine what it would have been like if years ago they had known Joseph and Mary?

What if the innkeeper was a relative? Just picture Joseph showing up with his pregnant wife, Mary, and this is his brother. Right? Or sister.

And of course, they open the door and they go, oh, sleep in the barn, right? I don't think so. It would be like, oh, Joseph, Mary, and the little baby. Oh, come on in.

We've got you sleep in our bed tonight. We'll sleep out in the barn if we have to, but you're going to sleep in the house. Right? They didn't know him.

[32 : 22] They didn't know him, so they didn't make any room and they missed him. Do we know him? I didn't know Bob.

Bob was my neighbor at the cottage. He lived right next door. You could almost reach out a hand from one cottage and shake hands with the other. They're that close. We waved to him, but I had so much work to do at that cottage when I bought it that all we did was just work on the cottage.

We didn't pay any attention to Bob, so we didn't know him. Maybe if we knew him, it would have been a different situation. Who knows what Bob would have really said if we would have ever talked to him about the driveway, but we didn't. We didn't know him.

I don't know. Do we know Jesus? Do you know Jesus? In the book of Luke in chapter 18, it says, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth? Will he find anybody interested in God?

They say that the church is in decline. Our church is doing okay, but they say most churches are declining. People aren't paying as much attention to their faith.

[33 : 25] And you know why? There's so much to do. Do you know Star Wars is coming out? Seriously, man. We're talking Harrison Ford.

They dragged that old dude out of the grave. You know? I mean, he's got to be, what, 89 years old or something. He's going to be out there. Oh, I'll go to it. Oh, I love it.

I love it. Yeah. We're all going to go see it because it's so exciting. All these great things to do. You know, when people give me excuses as to why they can't be at church, which I really don't need to hear, but when they do, they rarely tell me reasons.

Like somebody's in the hospital or there's something going wrong somewhere that they couldn't possibly make it. It's usually just other stuff. I had a family event. I was doing something with sports.

I had the opportunity to take a trip. We were at the lake. There's all kinds of wonderful things we can do in this life. Almost too many. Well, there are too many. That's why we feel we're stretched in every direction trying to make it to all this good stuff.

[34 : 33] And so somewhere, we let go of something. And the problem is is too many of us let go of our faith, our God. And so we don't know Him.

And we're not dressed. Dressed with the white robe of salvation, living like a Christian, living the way a Christian is supposed to be. Colossians, Paul tells us about Christian living and he says this.

As God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone.

Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues, put on love which binds them all together in perfect unity. Don't argue and get into fights about things that don't matter like a parking space or a property line or who's going to get a little bit more of this or that.

Do we address our lives, our attitudes, and our actions in such a way that people see Jesus in us? Did you hear about these mechanical creatures they've got in the malls now?

[35 : 51] They're like these big stuffed animals and you can ride on them. Literally. I mean, you can jump on the back of one of these suckers. They said they hold up to 300 pounds. Even I can ride on these things.

And you can tool around the mall for 20 bucks. You can ride on these things for half an hour. How cool is that? Anybody see them? They're pretty wild. A lot of bait banging around the malls.

20 bucks. Or you could spend 20 bucks and you could feed an entire family in Nicaragua for a week. Huh. Ah. You're not supposed to say that, Pastor.

It's so much fun riding on those little mechanical creatures. Taking away all the fun. I don't want you to give up all your fun. I'm not saying you need to give up all the good things of life.

But do we even have a mind anymore for God? Are we dressed for God and living for God?

[36 : 45] In this same passage, it talks about a rich man who had such a huge crop that his barns wouldn't hold it. And so he decided that the best solution was to tear down his barns and build bigger ones so he could store up these crops for the rest of his life and never have to work again.

Which, by the way, is foolish. Foolish. I mean, think about it. Why would you tear down perfectly good barns? And second of all, you can't store grain forever.

What do you do when you have an abundance of blessing more than you could ever possibly use to give it to someone who needs it? Right? That's obvious.

Well, it wasn't to this guy, so he figured he wouldn't have to work for the rest of his life. And you know, he was right. God said, tonight you die. Tonight you die. And what's going to happen to all that stuff you thought you'd have is going to go to somebody else anyways.

I said, this is what it's like when people don't recognize their relationship with me and why I put them on this earth. We're not put here to take up as much as we can, to eat up all the resources for ourselves, but to be part of an amazing, wonderful community of God.

[38 : 05] God turns things upside down, backwards from what we think. Are we living that inside out, upside down way of being God's people with love and compassion and caring and not hurt and anger and worry about our little piece of dirt?

And are we expecting Jesus? Are we expecting Jesus as much as we're expecting a man in a red suit? I mean, are we like worried about Jesus?

Are we concerned in living our lives as if it matters what we do because someone's watching? Did you hear about this creepy thing they call the elf on the shelf? I mean, really? This is over the top.

Hey, Timmy, be very careful with that. And Susie, why don't you put this on the mantle? And kids, this year we have a new tradition. What's that, Mom? It's called the elf on the shelf.

Every day, he'll take note of whether he's been good or bad and at night he'll fly off to the North Pole to report to Santa. Oh. I'm not sure I like that. Oh, no.

[39 : 19] It'll be fun. And the best part is every morning he'll be hiding in a new place and we can go and find him. But where's he gonna hide? Oh, anywhere, Susie. He could be hiding anywhere.

I'll put him on the mantle. Have fun, kids. So you want to play a game or something?

Yeah, okay. How about Risk? Risk is stupid. You're stupid. Why do we keep looking away?

I don't know. He could be anywhere. Watching, waiting for us to slip up and bam, no presents. I'm only eight. I can't deal with this level of stress. Just calm down.

We'll find that little narc and when we do... Jimmy? Jimmy? Jimmy? Woo! Woo! He's gathering evidence!

[40 : 19] Since when did we start living on Communist Russia? We have to... He's gone! Oh, no! We have to find him before he reports back to Santa! Where are you, you elf and tipsy?

Check the nativity. I'll check the points, set the flowers. Okay. No? He's... He's... I don't see anything.

Is he over there? No. I have no idea where he could be! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

[41 : 13] Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! What in the world is going on? You better watch out.

You better not cry. You better not shout. I'm telling you why. That little elf is paying attention to everything you do. Creepy. Now you're going to go home and get rid of the whole thing, aren't you?

Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

[42 : 11] Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

Ha! We forget. Like the people in this passage where it says that some people just fall asleep. It's not that they mean to turn away from God.

They're just, you know, occupied. When it happens, we forget God. It says God would come like a thief in the night.

And if you knew when the thief was coming, you'd be prepared. They come when it's unexpected. They look for unoccupied houses. Have you ever heard a phone call?

Right? Like, you know, the phone rings and you pick it up. Hello? Hello? Hello? Hello? Goodbye. You know, when that happens to me, I think, it's one of the thieves.

[43 : 14] They're checking out my house. Darn thieves. I'll get them. You know, are we prepared? Are we living our lives as if God could come at any time?

When will it be? Probably not Sunday morning. It says it'll be a time we're not expecting them. When we're not ready. So probably not when we're in church worshipping God.

This is probably about the time you can expect God won't come. But any other time, when we're just doing normal stuff. Matthew talks about it this way.

When Jesus says, it's like the days of Noah. It'll be the same way. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up till the day Noah entered the ark.

And they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That's what it's going to be like. We're going to be living our lives in a normal, regular way. Everybody's expecting some cataclysmic event.

[44 : 17] Some absolutely over-the-top thing for the end of the world. God's going to make this happen when we aren't expecting it the most. When we're living our day-to-day life.

And so we need to set our hearts with an attitude. An attitude that prepares us at any moment for God. And the difficulty is, is far too often, we don't live for God in this life.

We live this life for ourselves. In fact, I even have people say to me, Why should I worship God? Why should I go to church? Why should I do any of this stuff?

What's in it for me? Did you notice that in this passage it talks about servants? The servants were waiting anxiously to serve God.

And when God opens the door and comes in, did they wait on Him? No. God served them. You know why?

[45 : 15] Because they understood that it's good to serve God. It's good to serve other people. It's something we're supposed to enjoy and consider a blessing.

Not a pain in the neck. Not an inconvenience. Not taking away from us. But the followers of God want to do what God wants. And want to help people made in the image of God.

Do we live that way? As if we want to serve God. Follow God. And live for God. Or do we think it's all about us?

Part of our problem is we just don't see things the way they really are. Bob put his house up for sale. And the realtor was showing the perspective people around.

And she said, you know one of the best parts about this cottage is it's one of the few cottages that has a parking space right here next to the cottage. So you don't have to go very far. You don't have to park up the hill.

[46 : 16] You can park right next to your house. And I said, excuse me ma'am. Actually the property line is over here. And this is our parking space. This is our property.

We knew that because we had a survey done before we bought the house. We're not completely ignorant about life. And the property lines clearly showed that was our property. See the problem is out there.

They made all the property lines to match up with a railroad track. Nobody ever thought about that. So when they built the roads they went like this and they built their houses straight to the road. But all the property lines went crooked like this.

So the property lines go through people's houses, through people's sheds. They go into my parking area that Bob was parking in. And his brother-in-law was telling me to get out of.

See in this passage, it's fascinating because it starts out talking about a house that God owns that we're the servants in.

[47 : 16] And everything there is a blessing. But then it goes to a second parable within the parable where it says many of us see life as if we own the house.

And that darn God is going to come like a thief and take our stuff. That darn God wants our time. That God, he wants our money. He wants our things.

Who does God think he is? It's our stuff. But is it? 1 Timothy chapter 6 says, you know this one.

We brought nothing into the world and we can take nothing out of it. It's not our stuff.

But in our sense of greed and self-focus, we start to think it's about us. Did you know that farm workers do not have to make minimum wage?

[48 : 17] The rules don't apply to them. And they don't get overtime. And they are not allowed, legally not allowed, to form a union. Did you know that? That's just to keep the price of your groceries low. Somebody pays that price, though.

You know who it is. The shepherds. People like the shepherds. I mean, we think of shepherds as being some glorious profession. These guys had to go out in a field that they didn't own and watch animals that they didn't own, that were smelly and dirty, without taking a bath.

They had nothing out there. They had to live out in the hills in the cold and the dark, facing animals and thieves. And why did they do it? To make a few bucks to pay for their living.

It's an odd thing, isn't it? If we were to pick someone God would appear to, who would it be? If God were to come to earth, of course he'd visit the White House.

He'd go to the Capitol building. He'd go to Rome. Visit the Pope. Of course he'd appear to be, right? He'd pick shepherds.

[49 : 27] He'd pick up the bottom level of society. Because all the good, quality people weren't watching.

They were too busy in Bethlehem that night. And they missed it. But the shepherds, they were watching.

And they saw the angels. In the midst of this chapter, there's a lot of wonderful verses. And I want to share with you verse 32 through 34.

It says, Don't be afraid, little flock, for your father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. He wants you, really. Sell your possessions. Give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out.

A treasure in heaven that will never fail. Where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart is also. God turns things upside down.

[50 : 28] We give away the game. We give our time and God gives it back. We serve God and he serves us. So Bob's brother-in-law comes up one day.

Why didn't you tell me that was your property that I was telling you to get off of? This poor guy. He's been telling me for months now to get off my property.

Because his brother-in-law is coming. Get off your property. Now he's feeling about this big, you know. And I said, it really didn't matter.

Bob had parked there all the years that he owned the place. He thought it was his property. My mother got out of the car. I don't remember one time. Bob or his brother-in-law saying my mother couldn't get out of the car up there.

That's all that really mattered to us. We could walk up the hill. It didn't make any difference to us. It wasn't that big a deal. The other parking was 33 feet away. We can handle that.

[51 : 31] All that mattered was that mom could get out of the car. We get so wrapped up in stuff that really doesn't matter. So worried.

Somebody's going to be on our property. Somebody's going to get our stuff. Somebody's going to take the smallest. I've got another neighbor out there. You'll like this one. He sold his cottage.

He sold his cottage. Somebody else is moving in. You follow? It's sold. So about a month ago, he's complaining to me. He said, you know what our neighbor did? I said, what's that? He said, she built a shed on her property.

And the only way for her to get into that shed is to stand in my driveway. I said, it's not your driveway anymore. You sold the house. You don't own it anymore. It's just wrong.

She shouldn't build a shed. The only way you can get in it is to stand on my driveway. It's not your driveway anymore. And who cares?

[52 : 31] Who cares? You want to stand on my property and get in your shed? I don't care. I don't have the energy to fight over things that don't matter.

Because there's so many things in life that I seem to be missing because I'm trying to get to all the things that do matter. In the book of Psalms, it says, The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and all who live in it.

He founded it on the seas, established it on the waters. Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? The one who has clean hands or pure art, who does not trust in idle or swear by a false god.

Are we dressed for God? Do we have the lamp burning in our hearts? Are we looking for his coming? Are we living our lives where our treasure is in eternity?

Do we take time for what really matters? I miss important things. Far too often. Sometimes with some of you.

[53 : 35] I might get there five minutes late or 15 or 20. I don't know. I try to get to everything. I don't know how you feel. I feel like I'm stretching like 85 directions and it's just impossible.

Always get to what matters. When it really matters, I try really hard. My father was dying and they mercy flighted him into Buffalo.

And we were there when he left with the helicopter. We were there when he went in the emergency room. And I got to say goodbye to my father, not knowing he would die in surgery. My father-in-law, the same thing.

We took him to the hospital. We said goodbye to him when he went in for surgery and he didn't come out alive. My mother-in-law, we got a phone call. Now, we had already scheduled to go to Florida at 6 o'clock that evening.

We had it. The tickets purchased. And we got a call from the nurse saying, we don't think mom's going to make it another day. Seriously? All we need is like six hours.

[54 : 36] We got a call from the nurse. So we changed the flight. It cost a lot of money. We got to fly first class though. And we got there in time. That was well worth the cost.

When my mother-in-law died, my mother rather died, she was out at the cottage. I've told you before about her Thelma and Louise drive when she went down in her little cart and decided to put on a show in front of everybody.

We got a phone call that she had tipped over on her cart and fell. And so we got in the car. We went out there. Figured, you know, we should be there. Mom's banged up a little bit. But what I had no idea of is that we'd walk in the hospital and the doctor would say, you know, you're too late.

You're too late. She's gone. I said, well, is she back at the cottage? She's gone. She died of a heart attack on the way to the hospital.

I didn't get to say goodbye to my mother. There were a couple of neighbors there at the hospital when we showed up waiting, just wondering what had happened to my mother. They had driven her in.

[55 : 42] When we came out, they were gone, and we had to decide what to do. And it was late, 11, 30, 12 o'clock at night, so we decided not to drive home. We went to the cottage. We'll sneak there tonight.

And as we came down the road in the parking lot were all the neighbors. And the parking space, paying no attention to property lines, they were all on our property watching and waiting late at night.

They were waiting for us to show up. They could have been in bed sleeping, but the word went out. Did you hear? Did you hear Lorraine Kraft passed away? And they were waiting to just embrace us and be there.

You know, you can forget every property line issue, every argument you ever have with people when they're there, when you need them, right? And they were there to love us and care for us.

Are we watching? Are we waiting? Do we mess up on the little stuff, but get it right on the big stuff? Do you hear what I hear?

[56 : 49] Do you know what I know? Do you see what I see? God, God wants to embrace you in heaven. We'll be in heaven.

When you're the little lamb Do you see what I see? Way up in the sky Little lamb 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 kite With a tail as big as a kite Send the little lamb To the shepherd boy Do you see what I see?

Do you see what I see? Way up in the sky Shepard boy Do you see what I see? In what I hear?

A song of song I am both of the trees With a voice as big as a sea With a voice as big as a sea
Send the shepherd boy To the mighty king Do you know what I know?

[58 : 38] In your palace, the mighty king Do you know what I know?

I know what I know? I know what I know A child, a child Shivers in the cold Let us bring silver and gold
Let us bring silver and gold To the people everywhere Say the king to the people everywhere
Listen to what I say Listen to what I say Pray for these people everywhere 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 goodness and light On whom we hold this silent night

Although King is born in Bethlehem Our journey long We see the light That leads to the hallowed angel of God
But here we felt in the silent age For hundred years can we be found But broken by a baby's cry
Rejoice in the hallowed angel of God Emmanuel, Emmanuel, Emmanuel God incarnate, we to dwell Emmanuel, Emmanuel Emmanuel
Emmanuel Praise His name, Emmanuel

Praise His name, Emmanuel Emmanuel The Son of God, He is born to be The crown of thorns would pierce His throne
And we beheld His offering And we beheld His offering And we beheld His offering Exalted now, the King of kings
Praise God, who the hallowed angel of God Emmanuel, Emmanuel Emmanuel, Emmanuel Emmanuel, Emmanuel God incarnate, we to dwell
Emmanuel, Emmanuel Emmanuel Emmanuel, Emmanuel Emmanuel, Emmanuel Emmanuel Emmanuel, Emmanuel

Praise His name, Emmanuel Emmanuel Praise His name, Emmanuel and Emmanuel Praise His name, Emmanuel
Ultimately, it all came down to they didn't know Joseph.

[63 : 10] They didn't know Jesus. So they didn't make a place for him. Today, the most important thing that we can do is make a space for Jesus. He stands at the door of our hearts and he nods.

If we open it up, he comes and dwells with us in his house that he created in our hearts. Let's pray, shall we?

Dear God in heaven, I sometimes forget you. I get distracted. I get confused.

I become lukewarm. Set a fire in my heart. Light up my lamp. Fill me with your joy, your hope, your wonder, and your love.

Forgive me when I do wrong. And prepare eternity for me. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

[64 : 17] God. God. wants to celebrate with you. God is so excited. He's like that puppy dog just wanting to rejoice with you.

We open our hearts. And God comes in. In the name of Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. In the name of Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven.

Glory to God. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. O come, all ye grateful. All ye grateful, joyful, and triumphant, O God, ye O God, ye dear Bethlehem.

O God, let us adore Him, O God, let us adore Him, O God, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

[65 : 47] Sing, hiles of angels, sing in exultation, O sing, all ye spirits and the men above.

Glory to God, glory in the highest, O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

See how the shepherds summoned to His freedom, Leading their hearts from the light of grace.

Ring to Him, to the Lord. Ring to Him, to the Lord. Bend our joyful footsteps, O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

And Gents of angels, O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him, let us adore Him, let us adore Him, let us adore Him. O come, let us adore Him, let us adore God. We could have everything that He promised us.

[67 : 34] Come, let us adore Him. Let us adore Him. Let's come to the table. Let us remember all that God has done for us. And come, anticipating what God is going to do when we come to meet with Him here.

because God will meet with us here at this table. God invites you to come. Everyone is welcome at the table. If you love God, earnestly repent of your sin, and seek to live in peace as a disciple of Jesus Christ, you are welcome at the table.

You don't have to be a member of church here. It could be your first time that you've ever walked through the doors, but you are welcome because God welcomes you, and God desires for you to come into his presence.

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.

[68 : 56] You delivered us from captivity, made covenant to be our sovereign God, and spoke through your prophets. 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.

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, whom you sent in the fullness of time to be alike to the nations.

You scatter the proud in the imagination of their hearts and have mercy on those who fear you from generation to generation. You put down the mighty from their thrones and exalt those of low degree.

You fill the hungry with good things and the rich you send empty away. Your own Son came among us as a servant to be Emmanuel, your presence with us.

[69 : 59] He humbled himself in obedience to your will and freely accepted death on a cross. 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.

And on the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread and he gave thanks to you. And he broke the bread and gave it to his disciples, and he said, Take, eat.

This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

And when the supper was over, he took the cup, and he gave you thanks and praise and gave it to his disciples. He said, Drink from this, all of you. This is the cup of my blood. The blood of the new covenant is poured out for you.

It's poured out for many for the forgiveness of sin. Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of 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.

[71 : 24] 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 his 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 in your Holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and forever.

Amen. Now shall we pray together the prayer Jesus taught us. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Amen. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

[72 : 42] For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Jesus invites all those who seek after him to come to the table.

As we come to the table, we take God into our lives, into our hearts, we welcome him into our hearts, and we become his. Come join us at the table at the rail for prayers for healing, light a candle.

[74 : 07] Come and join us. We stand and sing to the Lord.

Come and join us. Come and join us.

We stand and sing to the Lord. Christ is one. Well, shepherds kept their watching, O silent arcs by night.

Behold, throughout the heavens, They've shown a holy light.

Mountain, mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. And go down on the mountain, When Jesus Christ is born.

[75 : 46] And in a lonely manger, The humble Christ was born. And God sent us salvation, That blessed Christmas morn.

Go down on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere.

And go down on the mountain, And Jesus Christ is born. The house next door to me has changed hands about three or four times since Bob lived there.

And every once in a while as we're driving down the street, we'll see a car parked in our parking space. It's the neighbor's. Now he fell and hurt his back and walks with a cane, you know.

And so when he sees us coming down the road, he comes right out of his house. I'll move the car. I'll move the car, Tom. I'm sorry it's there. It's like, it's okay, really.

[76 : 52] It's fine. You don't have to rush. Oh, no, but it's your property. It's okay. Our park and the neighbor's place across the street. Besides, I don't know, they might change the property lights back again and then who knows whose it'll be.

Why do we worry about stuff like this? There's so much more important things. Live a life designed to meet your Savior and celebrate with him in glory.

Live your life filled with love and possibilities of hope. Let the rest of it just kind of melt away into the grace that God has given us. So in his peace, his strength, his hope and his joy, this day and forevermore.