

December 13, 2015

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Date: 13 December 2015

Preacher: Pastor Tom Kraft

[0 : 0 0] Dear God, we do thank you for all the things going on this year, all the wonderful things this time of year. Draw us, though, right now away from all the busyness, all the concerns, all the thoughts about what we have to do and what we're about.

And bless us just to be touched by the hand of God. As we come to worship you, bless us and fill us in Jesus' holy name. Amen. And this is the third week of Advent, so as we light our Advent candles this morning, let's hear from the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 1.

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about. His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit.

Because Joseph, her husband, was faithful to the law and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins. All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet, the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Emmanuel, which means God with us.

[1 : 1 8] When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him, and took Mary home as his wife. But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son, and he gave him the name Jesus.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. I invite you to stand if you're able as we sing together. Hail to the Lord's anointing. Hail to the Lord's anointing. limit.

viibus■■ is of Hail to the Lord's anointed, Great David, greatest Son, Hail in the time appointed, His reign unbegun, He comes to break oppression, To set my captain free, To take away transgression, And rule in equity, He comes with sinners calling,

To those who stand the wrong, To help the poor and poor, And with the weak be strong, To give them songs for sighing, Their darkness turned to light, Whose souls loved and dying, Are precious in His sight.

He shall come down like showers, Upon the fruitful earth, Love, joy, and hope like flowers, To Him is found to birth, Before Him on the mountains, Shall each of her old gold, And righteousness in mountains, From hill to valley, To the holy glory, To Him shall bless, On sin and sin, And daily powers ascend, His kingdom's true and prison, A kingdom without end, The title of the land, His covenant will prove,

[4 : 1 7] His name shall stand forever, The pain to loss, His love.

The Lord be with you. Before we greet each other with the peace of the Spirit, I want to mention the ornaments on the tree. The kids put those on the tree, and if you have not written your family name on an ornament, there's some out the back of the sanctuary on a table.

Write your family name. It's not one per person, but one per family, And put your name up on the tree. So now I'd like to invite the kids to come up and put an ornament on the tree, while I also encourage you to pass a peace of the Spirit with one another.

Let you go out. Hi. Come on over here, guys. Come on over here, kids.

Any other kids want to come up?

[5 : 50] They're welcome to come on down. Now, we've got other kids still putting them on the tree, don't we? Last week we put Mary, we put Mary in our manger sink.

Because the angel appeared to Mary. But this week we have somebody different. Anybody know who he is? It's Joseph, yes. Mary and Joseph were engaged. They weren't married yet.

They were engaged. And Mary became pregnant. And Joseph was concerned about that. So he said, I don't think I'm going to stay married to Mary, because I don't think that's right.

But God appeared to him in a dream and said, it's okay, Joseph. It's my son that Mary's going to give birth to. So take her to be your wife and have a good life with her. So that's what he did.

So they got married. And they had a baby named Jesus. And they had a boy named Jude. And another one named James. And they also had some daughters, but we don't know their names.

[6 : 48] We should make up their names, shouldn't we? Don't you think one was named Mary? I think so, because her name was Mary, right? And the other one was probably named Isabel, Juliana.

Maybe your name, right? Okay. What do you thank them for this morning? Raise your hand if you want to share something. Family. My mom and dad and Tim.

My mom and dad. Sisters and brothers. Friends and family and Jesus. Friends and family. Friends and family.

Mom and dad. My mom and dad. My mom and dad. Mom and dad. Okay. Let's pray, shall we?

Lord, we thank you for our parents. We thank you for Jesus. We thank you for the wonderful things in our lives. And we pray that you bless us and guide us and keep us all. For it's in Jesus' name we pray.

[7 : 45] Amen. Okay, you guys can all go out to church school. The children are welcome to go out to church school now. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Good morning.

As we continue in our worship, let's bring our gifts, tithes, and offerings joyfully good at You and Theory fore Mobility. Let's bring our gifts, tithes, and offerings joyfully before the Lord. You give your gifts, tithes, and offerings joyfully before the Lord. Yes, it is during your day when you're listening. Lord, you are Mikasa crustiles are weary to near to■ to armen at your monstrous , Danny Dieser.

God Brookhaven, Abraham karntius Isabella Inside the planner of Christ, Christian, Mitch Pushko Whene Feuer good morning. As we continue in our worship, let's bring our gifts, tithes, and offerings joyfully before the Lord. continue in our worship, let's bring our gifts, tithes, and offerings joyfully before the Lord. O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel, and mourns in lonely exile near, until the Son of God appear.

Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, O come, O Lord, Accepted Jesus, born to set thy people free.

[9 : 58] From our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee.

To Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art.

- Dear desire of every nation, joy of every calling God.
 Born thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a king.
 Born to reign in us forever, thou thy gracious kingdom bring.
- [11 : 15] By thy whole eternal spirit, ruling all our hearts alone.
 By thy all-sufficient Mary, raise us to thy glorious throne.
 Dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.
 Every heart, every heart.
 Amen. Praise the Lord, the heavenly host.
- [12 : 49] Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Lord, our love, our love, our love.
- Dear Heavenly Father, we do give you thanks and praise for this day. And for the opportunity to gather together and worship you. We thank you also for the opportunity to give of our gifts, our tithes, and our offerings.
- Give us wisdom, Lord, to know how to best use them for the furtherance of your kingdom. Bless them, Lord. Multiply them. Make us well able to reach those people that you have called us to reach.
- In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Please be seated. And my voice is about half back from what it was last week.
- Last week, I wasn't up here because nothing was coming out. So they just said, nah. But I prayed for you. We do need to lift up some folks in our prayers this week.
- [14 : 04] Norma Wittig, Bob Wurtenberger, Jim Phillips, and Sandy Masterson are all dealing with health issues. And I know that you also know of folks who are in need of prayer for healing and other such things.
- We also want to lift up the family of Floyd Goff. We were informed that this past week that he passed away on Thursday. And there will be a service, a celebration of his life at a later date.
- We don't have that date yet. But I know his family is in need of our prayers as we remember Floyd. So with these concerns and those that are in your heart, let's turn to the Lord in prayer.
- Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. God bless you with his own khi hoc know your washing■■■, vape like, joyous will be true to come.
- day with joy in our hearts to what you have prepared for us, Lord. Help us by your Spirit to prepare ourselves to receive all that you have for us.
- [15 : 33] To be willing to do those things you call us to do and go those places you call us to go. Be, Lord, with all of those folks who are sick and infirm. Touch them with your healing power.
- Bring them into wholeness, Lord, in their spirits, their souls, and their bodies from the tops of their heads to the soles of their feet. Be also with those people who are caring for them, the doctors and the nurses and other medical professionals as well as their family and their friends.
- Give them patience. Give them wisdom. Give them compassion in their hearts, Lord. Give them a voice of firmness, Lord, when that might be needed.
- But bring it with love. Father, we pray for those who are mourning the losses of loved ones who are in grief at this time.
- So many joyful things happening around, so many reminders of happiness and good things. And there is sadness in some of our hearts.

- [17 : 01] We just ask, Lord God, that you would bring comfort by your Holy Spirit and peace that passes all understanding. Help each and every one to know your love and your mercy.
- Help each and every one to remember love and happy time. Lord, we're at a time of so much uncertainty in our world and in our nation.
- We are unsure of how to move forward, how to proceed, how to deal with the issues that are happening around us. Be with us, Lord.
- Fill us with your Spirit. Fill us with your joy and understanding of how to share your great love wherever we go.
- Help us to know who to speak to and what words to say. Show us who you have prepared to hear your word, who you have called and drawn that are in our lives, that are ready to hear the message of your salvation in Jesus Christ.
- [18 : 32] We pray, Lord, that you would draw everyone. Don't leave anyone out, Lord.
- We know that you see each and every heart. We know that by your Spirit you draw them to yourself. Lord, we pray for those who are separated from loved ones this year at this time.
- We pray for comfort for them as well. Lord, we pray that as we hear your word, your word would transform us, wash us, prepare us, for what you called us through this season.
- Be with Pastor Tom. Anoint him to deliver the message that you've given for us today. Give us eyes to see and ears to hear and hearts and minds to understand and receive what you have.
- In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Shall we hear from the word of the Lord? you Torah Good morning.
- [20 : 27] Today's scripture reading is from Matthew chapter 13, verses 24 through 30. Jesus told them another parable. The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field.
- But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.
- The owner's servants came to him and said, Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from? An enemy did this, he replied.
- The servants asked him, Do you want us to go and pull them up? No, he answered, because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest.
- At that time, I will tell the harvesters, First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned. Then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.
- [21 : 29] This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Thank you, Elizabeth. Advent season. Advent season.
- We've been looking at the coming of Jesus. The coming of Jesus in Bethlehem. The coming of Jesus in our hearts. The coming of Jesus in glory to reclaim all of creation.
- And each of these little stories or parables that Jesus told tells us a little something about the end times. And typically there is a division. The good go to glory.
- The bad go to destruction. The wheat and the weeds. The good go to the Lord. Lately, I've noticed a lot of people have a lot of fears.
- It seems to be coming pervasive in our culture. We read about it in the paper. We see it on TV. We experience it as we have discussions with one another.

[22 : 30] And it takes on all forms. This morning I was reading in the newspaper about how young Muslim women are feeling insecure about going out shopping. They make sure they go with two or three at a time because they're afraid that they'll be assaulted.

And at the same time as they're walking through the mall, I know we have people who are wondering what they're doing and concerned about them. Back when I worked for Chemlon, we used to go to this little tavern across the street.

And they would say to us that it was a biker bar. It was kind of a dangerous place. And I wondered why. They never gave us any trouble. And they said, well, because you're truck drivers. It's all a matter of impression, right?

Scary truck drivers can frighten those bikers. And the bikers kind of had us a little apprehensive. Joseph was afraid. He was afraid. His wife became pregnant.

I don't know what to do with that. They weren't even married yet, actually. They were just engaged. What would people say? He's a righteous man. He's a good fellow. He's religious.

[23 : 44] And not only that, there's this idea that this is God's son. Who wants to raise God's son? Really, you know? Little Jesus is getting out of line. You say, Jesus, straighten that out right.

Okay, whatever Jesus, whatever you want to do. Right? You want to be the stepchild to the son of God? He was afraid. And fear can cause us to have all sorts of emotions.

Sometimes we get angry. You know what they did to me? That anger can cause us maybe to react in ways in which we wouldn't otherwise.

Joseph was a righteous man. He thought, I'll put her away quietly. That's a merciful thing to do. We do that. We put away people who hurt us or cause us trouble.

My father and his brothers got into an argument about mistake. And so they didn't talk to each other for 20 years. They just disappeared from our lives. We had no idea where they went to.

[24 : 47] Sometimes people unfriend you. Is that what it's called? On Facebook. I've had people unfriend me. They just disappeared. Where did they go?

We put them away quietly so we don't have to face it. We don't have to think about it. We treat them like they're weeds in our garden. There were a bunch of seeds planted in a good field.

And all of a sudden the servants said they found a bunch of weeds there. And the servants came to God and said, how did they get there? Now we know, because this is one of the few parables that's interpreted.

It's in verse 36 through 43 of Matthew. It's interpreted. We know the servants are angels. They say, didn't you plant good seed, God? How did these bad people get there?

And there are evil people and evil thoughts and evil things in this world we live in. In the kingdom of God, there's evil.

[25 : 50] In fact, even in the church, we have this in our own lives. And just like the angels, we say, God, we want to wipe this out.

Take it away. Take it away. We can't stand to have this evil and the fear it produces in our midst. A young man was raised in Pendleton, New York.

Went to Star Point School. Graduated, went off and joined the military. Fought in Desert Storm. Received the Bronze Star. He was a hero. Came home and put 5,000 pounds of explosives in front of an Oklahoma building.

He killed 168 people. 15 of them children. 680 people wounded. Next to 9-11, the largest single act of terrorism in this country's history.

Take care of that place where he came from. People that would raise somebody like that. Everybody who lives in that Pendleton place should have something on their license. Saying that they should be feared.

[26 : 58] We should worry about them. What do we do? What do we do? Because the difficulty is we've got the good and the bad alike all mixed together.

And if we wipe it all out, what will we have? Proverbs chapter 15 says, God does not call us to stir up anger.

And yet fear can cause us to become angry. Fear can cause us to doubt. To doubt our relationship. To doubt what we believe. To doubt what we think about other people.

To doubt our God himself. Joseph was a righteous man. I can imagine him saying to himself, Why is this happening to me? God is good.

God is all powerful. How can there be this kind of evil in our world? The angels ask, How did this happen? And the answer that they get from the master is, The devil did it.

[28 : 10] But don't you want to say, Yeah, but we read in the book, God, that you created everything. Which means you even created the devil, right? So it's your fault.

Hard. Hard. And then we have this passage where it says that he created everything and went away.

Like God's on vacation. Hello? I don't want a God on vacation. I don't know about you. I want a God on the job every minute, every day, 24-7. Amen?

I don't need some God off taking a nap or getting some time off here. Why is this evil? Mark goes back to the very beginning.

And it's really about what we let grow in our hearts and our lives. Seeds. Seeds can't grow unless you nurture them. You give them the nutrition. You give them water.

[29 : 13] You give them sunshine. And you give them an environment to live in. Without that, seeds would just sit there and do nothing. That's the nature of seeds. If we don't nurture them, they don't do anything.

So the problem is that somehow the seeds of evil have been nurtured. You see, these seeds were sown both for good and for evil before anything grew, before there was a plant in the earth.

God created the possibility for good. God created the possibility for good. God created us in his image.

God ultimately can do whatever God wants. That's what makes him God. God, so he has a choice. He has freedom to choose. And if he's going to make creatures in his image, he has to give them the ability to choose too, which means a real choice is not you can have that table or you can have that table.

You can have good or you can choose evil. It's only the possibility. It is only the possibility. People nurtured. People planted.

[30 : 26] People gave birth to evil in this world. And to tell you the truth, the Bible says it caused the angels in heaven to fall. The devil himself. We gave it life.

We nurture evil along with the good and then wonder why there's bad in the world. And we blame everyone. Everyone else. Including God.

Seeds are the direction we choose our lives to go. What values we choose. To tell. My grandfather grew up in Germany.

He worked on the U-boats. Submarines. Submarines that probably during World War sunk American ships. And killed American soldiers.

My grandfather came over as a merchant marine. And when he was in New York City, he saw the gleaming city and he jumped off the boat and swam to the shore. He was an illegal alien.

[31 : 34] He worked hard. Tried to make a life for himself. Had a family. Became a U.S. citizen. And when our nation went to war, he sent four of his sons across on those boats that were in danger of the submarines that he had built.

To fight against his own country. It's very hard sometimes to figure out which are the good seed and which are the bad seed.

How do we know? How can we tell them apart? How can we tell them? How can we tell them? How can we tell them? How can we tell them? How can we tell them? The book of Matthew in chapter 5, Jesus says, You have heard that it was said, Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.

But somebody hearing this said, Well, who is my neighbor anyways? When I was in college, I used to attend an annual conference in downtown Pittsburgh.

One year, the keynote speaker ran an inner city ministry in Pittsburgh. And he was trying to communicate to us, 2000 white-collared college kids, the motivation behind his ministry.

[32 : 53] So he began to sing, he's got the whole world in his hands. And we all laughed, because the speaker was making an absolute fool of himself. But as he kept singing, he began to change the lyrics.

And rather than the whole world in his hands, he began to sing, he's got the pimps and the prostitutes in his hands.

And then, he's got the drug dealers and gangbangers in his hands. And you could feel the air go out of their room. Because just like that, 2000 college kids had their little church bubbles burst.

I mean, for 18 years, most of us had been taught that God cared about wearing the right church clothes, singing the right church songs, and saying the right church answers.

Never could we conceive that God loved the unlovable. At least, not in the way the speaker was suggesting. Our God is a great God.

[33 : 58] And he loves us in ways we'll never be able to imagine. He is great and mighty and just. Our God is a righteous God. But our God is also compassionate and merciful and gracious.

He loves us, but not so we can keep that love for ourselves. He loves us and empowers us to love the world around us. The world in which we live. To love the church goers, as well as those who curse God.

To love the pure of heart, as well as those who are anything but. It isn't a love reserved for any one group or any one kind of person. God loves the CEO just as much as he loves the unemployed.

God loves the teacher and the doctor and the lawyer just as much as he loves the addict and the gambler. God gave his son to the world that we might believe in him and live according to his word and be covered in his blood.

God loves the Lord. To what end? That we might go out into the world to love and to serve, to share his name and his glory with our neighbor.

[35 : 13] Who is our neighbor? Open your eyes and look around. Open your eyes and look around.

God says to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. It goes on to say that God causes the rain to fall in the sun and to shine on the good and the bad alike.

If we want to be sons of the kingdom, children of the kingdom, we need to love like God does. It's hard. It's hard when we have weeds in the world.

How do we define them? How do we even know which one is a sinner and which one is a weed? I can tell the difference in your lawn between a piece of ryegrass, bluegrass, quackgrass, crabgrass, tall fescue, red fescue, poanna, St. Augustine, zoysiagrass, all sorts of grass.

I can tell the difference on them. When it gets to the garden, you can ask my wife. Because I like the weed that's rounded up. And there have been many, many times that I couldn't tell which was a weed and which was a flower.

[36 : 57] And so the wrong ones went to destruction. Only the angels seem to know who the weeds are. We don't know.

And even they're told to keep their hands off them. Because after all, 1 Corinthians says, Who knows the mind of someone else, their thoughts, except their own spirit within them?

Just like we don't really know fully the heart of God. I know someone would say, but Matthew says, You don't pick fruit from a thorn bush or figs from thistles.

Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree can't bear bad fruit, and a bad tree can't bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down, thrown in the fire.

So by their fruits, you'll know them. I've had people in my life, and I imagine you have too, who have lied to me, talked behind their backs about me, stolen from me, slandered me, betrayed me.

[38 : 08] And a lot of them are in this congregation. In my family. In the group of people I call my friends.

It makes it so hard, doesn't it? That's what makes it so hard. I'm afraid that if I start whittling down the list of people that are weeds from wheat, I'll end up with just me.

And you all know that I'm not perfect. Here to make us blind. Joseph was told that the child was from the Holy Spirit.

But he didn't want to believe it. He's still afraid. The master says the weeds and the wheat are all intertwined.

Their roots are growing together. If you rip up one, you're going to rip up the other. If we attack one person, we're going to hurt another. How do we know which ones to weed out of our lives?

[39 : 20] My brother-in-law came to this country about 30 years ago. He was from the West Bank of Palestine. His father was, or uncle rather, was a high official in the Palestinian Liberation Organization, which at the time was considered a terrorist organization.

They followed him around and every time he went to an airport, he was stopped and was taken off to the side. Back then they did this thing called profiling. Not a bad idea in some ways.

He'd never done anything wrong. Not over there, not over here. He married my sister. Raised a family in this country.

And now he has top secret clearance with the government. He buys stuff. You know? So he's the guy they call and they say, the hammer's going to cost \$100.

The difference is, he doesn't say, okay. He says, I don't think so. I can get them at Helm Depot for like two and a half bucks, pal. You get your price down to \$3 or this isn't going to happen.

[40 : 26] He alone has probably saved this country a billion dollars just because he won't take the contracts. He tells them there's some other place to go. And they say, you can't do that. He says, no signature, no sale.

Simple as that. But he's from the West Bank. Doesn't look like the rest of my family in a lot of ways.

It's so hard. Our coworkers, our neighbors. Can we really trust them? Do we really know the people in our church?

Are you convinced that your family members have it all together? Who can you trust? If we get down to the righteous people, who will be left?

They did that once, you know. God decided he was going to get down to just the righteous people. There were eight people left that got on that boat. Are you convinced that out of the whole world's population, you're going to be one of the eight?

[41 : 23] I'm not. Heck, if it's 8,000, I'm not sure if I'd make the cut. It's hard. It's a real hard thing.

Do we even know ourselves what our hearts are about? Especially when in the book of Mark, Jesus says, no one is good except God alone.

And in the book of Romans, it says, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. I don't know if you're understanding this. You know who the weeds are. We're all weeds.

Every last one of us. You and me alike are weeds. The problem is we read this passage, and we think we're the good seed, and the weeds are over there.

We just got to get rid of them. But we're the weeds. There's a story Jesus told in another parable where he says a guy came in, and he owed his boss like \$5 million.

[42 : 24] There's no way he could pay it. So he got down on this. He says, I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. Please, please don't throw me in jail. I've got a family. Please have mercy on me. And so his master said, okay, I'll forgive the debt.

I'll forgive the debt. Go ahead. Go away in peace. And it says he was walking out the door of his master's office, and he saw a guy owe him \$100, and he grabbed him out of the neck and said, you owe me \$100?

The guy said, please, please. I don't have it right now, but I've got a family and kids, so please just have mercy on me. The guy said, mercy on you? You are going to go to jail until you pay the last penny.

Oh, it's so easy. It's so easy to see how somebody else is a weed. But when we become a weed, we say to God, have mercy on me.

God. God. God looks down at this world.

[43 : 23] John 3.16. Anybody know what it says? Have you ever heard? Anybody ever hear that verse, John 3.16? I think it says something like, God was so disappointed with the world that he sent his son to destroy it, wipe it out, and start all over again, right?

God so loved the world that he gave his only son, his one and only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through it. I'm not naive.

I understand that there's times when nations will rise up against nations, and even the Bible has times when God has said it has to be so. I know that we need to have armies and police officers.

My wife is in the military. I know we need to have jails and prisons because when people cause so much harm that they're dangerous to the whole community, we need to do something about that.

[44 : 25] Keep people safe. Or we don't love our neighbors. I know sometimes parents need to look out for their children and see who they're going to hang with and who they're going to be around. I know that sometimes we find ourselves in court.

If something isn't right, if somebody has to make a decision and do something about this, I get that. I understand. I understand. sometimes we need to do what needs to be done.

Proverbs chapter 13 says, whoever spares the rod hates their children, but the one who loves their children is careful to discipline them.

But here's the point. discipline is meted out to change behaviors, to correct inappropriate behaviors. If you discipline a child or anyone with the intention of correcting their behaviors, that's a loving action.

But when you attack, assault, or hurt someone because you're angry and you're upset and full of fear and concern and it makes you feel better, that's abuse.

[45 : 42] That's abuse. Whether that abuse is done by a parent or by a friend, even by a nation, what God calls us to do is to share love, not fear.

I'm worried about the condition of the world too. I'm more concerned as a pastor about the condition of your soul and my soul and that we don't turn into darkness and become part of the problem ourselves.

God said, I'll do the weeding. Not us. Not even the angels. Some will go to fire.

Some will go to glory. That's the problem. And our goal is to make sure we go to glory. Not to worry about the ones going to the fire.

Romans chapter 12 tells us, Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath. For it's written, It is mine to avenge. I will repay, says the Lord. Vengeance is expensive in time, in money, in mental anguish.

[46 : 56] Vengeance is something that uses religion like a tool to be hateful and hurtful and harmful to try and figure out the good from the bad.

That's what religion does. The good ones are here. The bad ones are there as if we know how to tell the difference. An angel appeared to Joseph and said, Don't be afraid.

I don't know how much you know about angels, but in the Bible there were two angels that appeared one time and they toasted entire cities, wiped them off the face of the earth. Two angels. If an angel appears to you, I would be shaken in my boots if it happened to me and hope that that angel says, Don't be afraid.

Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid of the one that can destroy your body, Jesus says. Be afraid of the one that can destroy your body and your soul in hell.

1 John chapter 4 tells us there's no fear in love. Perfect love drives out fear because fear has to do with going to the fire.

[48 : 09] We are not people of the fire. God says he allows the bad seed and the good seed to grow until the end.

You know, that really bothered me, though, because I thought, now, if the seeds are people, then that means people are bad from the beginning or good from the beginning, which means you were predestined to go to heaven or predestined to go to hell before you even started your journey on this earth.

And there's some Christians that believe that. That bothered me because I know seeds can't change, right? You can't change a plant once it's been planted. It's what it is. You can't make one plant become another plant.

Can you? Has anybody ever seen this tree outside our church door? I don't know if you can really tell, but that thing down below, it's not a bush. That's part of the tree.

Go look at it sometime. It is one of the weirdest looking trees on the face of the earth. I've had people say to me, we've got to get rid of that weird tree. It doesn't know what it is. It doesn't know which kind it's supposed to be.

[49 : 12] But I've got to tell you, I love this tree. I love this tree because this tree says to me, there is always hope. There is always the possibility that when I'm broken and when I'm dark and when I'm going the wrong way, God could turn me around.

He could change me. The way he describes it in the Bible is called grafting. You take another good plant and you graft it into the bad one. Now you notice they're both growing, right?

So we have to decide which we're going to nurture. Which are we going to give life to? Are we going to be people who give life to fear and anger and darkness and pain?

Are we going to listen to that? To the angel? He said, don't be afraid. Don't be afraid to let love drive out fear.

Don't be afraid to live the way Jesus lived. Don't be afraid because God can take you through the storm and God will decide in the end who needs to go to one or the other.

[50 : 24] I'm glad that that is me who makes the decision. Jesus said in the book of Matthew, you're the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl.

Instead, they put it on its stand and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

We are not people of the darkness. We are not people of the pain. We're not people of vengeance and hurt and anger. We're the people who are supposed to take this world and bring the light of God, the blessings of God into it.

You know, this time of year, people are always lighting candles. Ooh, candles. Why do we light a candle? The candles. The candles. The light of God.

In the darkness. That's what God calls us to do. There is a candle in every stole There is a candle in every stole Some brightly burning Some dark and cold There is a spirit Who brings a fire Ignites a candle And makes it home Take your candle Carry your candle Run to the darkness Seek out the hopeless Confused and torn Pull out your candle

[52 : 18] For all to see it Take your candle Go light your candle Go light your world Take your candle Take your candle Take your candle Go light your world Frustrated mother See how he's tried to Light his own candle Light his own candle Some other way See now your sister Spent love and light too Still holds our candle Still holds our candle Still holds our candle Without a flame Carry your candle Run to the darkness Seek out the lonely The time and war

Pull out your candle For all to see it Take your candle Go light your candle Go light your world Take your candle Take your candle Take your candle Go light your world We are a family Whose hearts are blazing So let's raise our candles And light up the sky Pray to our Father In the name of Jesus Make us a beacon In darkness time Spill your candle Run to the darkness Run to the darkness Run to the darkness Run to the darkness Seek out the helpless Seek out the helpless

Deceived and torn Hold out your candle Hold out your candle For all to see it Take your candle Take your candle Go light your world Go light your world Guide your candle Go light your world zaten Anna ■■■■ TheJordan Esther■ Hy Hang i fi all to see it. Take your candle, go light your world. Take your candle, go light your world.

Oh, they told me, ba-rum-bum-bum-bum. Are you my king to see, ba-rum-bum-bum-bum?

Our finest gifts we bring, ba-rum-bum-bum-bum. To lay before the king,
ba-rum-bum-bum-bum.

[56 : 07] Ba-rum-bum-bum, ba-rum-bum-bum. So to honor him, ba-rum-bum-bum, when we come.
Give it Jesus, ba-rum-bum-bum-bum. I am a poor boy too, ba-rum-bum-bum-bum.

Ba-rum-bum-bum-bum. I have no gift to bring, ba-rum-bum-bum-bum.
Ba-rum-bum-bum-bum. That's it to give our king, ba-rum-bum-bum.

Ba-rum-bum-bum-bum, ba-rum-bum-bum-bum. Shall I play for you,
ba-rum-bum-bum-bum.

Ba-rum-bum-bum-bum. On my drum. Ba-rum-bum-bum-bum. Very God is,
ba-rum-bum-bum-bum.

[57 : 23] The ox and lamb get tied, ba-rum-bum-bum-bum. I play my drum for him,
ba-rum-bum-bum.

Ba-rum-bum-bum-bum. I play my drum for him, ba-rum-bum-bum-bum. I play my best for
him, ba-rum-bum-bum-bum.

Ba-rum-bum-bum-bum, ba-rum-bum-bum-bum. When he smiled at me,
ba-rum-bum-bum-bum, Ba-ba-ba-ba.

Me and my drum. Me and my drum. Me and my drum.

Please be seated. I'm afraid to. Thank God I don't have to make the decisions of when to
use the sword and when not to.

[58 : 28] I pray for the people who have to do that every day and you should too. That's a hard
thing to do and sometimes it's necessary. I get that. And sometimes we can't decide
whether the actions we're taking are the actions of weed or the actions of flower.

We can turn our hearts towards what God wants. And let God lead us. And then ask God
to forgive us. And we do the best we can.

And still sometimes come up wrong. So pray with me if you will. Dear God in heaven. I
have sinned.

Sometimes I make the wrong decisions. I get angry. I get afraid. I get worried. Forgive me
Lord.

Guide my heart. Help me to grow towards you. To become what you want. To be a
blessing.

[59 : 34] To oppose you. But not be done. Forgive me Lord. In Jesus name. Amen.

Amen. God doesn't forgive you because you're so good. God doesn't forgive you because
you had a good week and you did everything right.

God forgives us because that's the only way we get good. We're not good enough to do it
on our own. God ingrats us with his grace.

And makes us into something wonderful. In the name of Jesus Christ whose sins are
forgiven. Glory to God.

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

[60 : 30] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. And in the dark streets shined the everlasting light.

The hopes and fears of all the years are met in the eternal night.

For Christ is born of Mary and gathered up above. While the Lord of the angels keep their
watch of one to know.

[61 : 39] All morning stars together proclaim the holy birth. And praises sing to God our King and
praise to men on earth.

How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given. So God impides to human hearts a
place in God's hand.

Now we may hear his coming, but in this world of sin. Where meek souls will receive him still, but dear Christ's fantasy.

Oh, holy child of Bethlehem, discern to us, we pray.

And so I'm still ever to ring, be born in us today. We hear the Christmas angels, the great-black tidings set.

[63 : 07] Oh, come to us, abide with us, our Lord, be in heaven. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever would believe in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

Are you ready to receive the gift? This is why we celebrate Holy Communion. We remember that God sent Jesus and that Jesus offered us his body and blood so that we could be saved from our sin.

The greatest gift of all that brings the greatest peace of all. Everyone is welcome at the United Methodist Church table, for God is present.

If you love God, earnestly repent of your sin and seek to live in peace. As a disciple of Jesus Christ, you are welcome to come to the table this morning.

Even if you're not a United Methodist, even if it's the first time you've ever been to church, if you seek God, you are welcome this morning.

[64 : 39] So come, receive the gift God offers you. The Lord be with you. Lift up your heart. 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 your prophets, who looked for that day when justice shall roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

When nations shall not lift up sword against nations, neither shall they learn war anymore. And so with your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn.

[65 : 48] Holy, holy, holy Lord. 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 a light 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. 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 on the night in which he gave himself up for us took bread.

[67 : 03] And he gave thanks to you. And he broke the bread and gave it to his disciples. 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 gave you thanks and praise, and he gave it to his disciples, and he said, Drink from this, all of you. This is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new covenant, poured out for you.

It is 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 thee, your mighty act, 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.

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.

[68 : 37] 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.

Shall we pray together, with the confidence of disciples of Jesus Christ, the prayer he taught? 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, 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.

[69 : 44] 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.

God opens up his table to all those who seek after him. Whether you're a member of our church or you're new to our church, young or old, God invites you to the table to come and experience his grace.

[71 : 08] Come to the rail if you wish to, for prayers, for healing, anointing, to light a candle. Come and join us. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[73 : 21] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[75 : 51] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.