

Christmas Eve 2020

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Date: 24 December 2020

Preacher: Pastor Cathy Hall Stengel

[0 : 00] Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
[2 : 30] Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
[5 : 00] Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
[7 : 29] Thank you.
 Thank you. Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Thank you. Thank you.
 Thank you.
[12 : 29] Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
[14 : 59] Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
[17 : 29] Thank you.

Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
[19 : 59] Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
[22 : 29] Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
[24 : 59] Thank you.
Thank you.
Merry Christmas.
Thank you.
Thank you.
[27 : 59] Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
[30 : 29] Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
This week.
There's nothing.
[32 : 59] Jesus is born.
We hold you.
We call out to God.
whatever is, He comes to take you.
We lost our place.
[35 : 59] We're back and we think, Jesus comes.
Welcome, you're built, you, you are, None of us, none of us in any walk in our life were
abandoned in any place to be forgotten.

We were put in places to be found, in this place. However you are with us in this space, you were placed in this space to be found and not forgotten.

I want to change the scenery and invite you to imagine a little toddler boy.

You don't have to imagine him, there he is. Standing in front of a beautiful Christmas tree, his eyes, his face lit up with all the light and the magic.

[38 : 18] And he stared at the tree for a while and then he went and got figures from the nativity scene. We always let our kids touch and handle and hold the figures in the nativity.

And he takes them one at a time and first he picks up Mary. And he runs to me and he puts Mary into my hands and he looks up at me and says, Mama, Mama.

And he patted my cheek as if I could have been that young woman who said yes. And then he runs back for Joseph and he lifts him up and he looks at me and he says, Papa.

Papa. And then, with his little boy, sweet little hands, he went and got baby Jesus out of the manger.

And he held him in his hands. And he put him like this and he went, Shh. I'm sleeping. Sleeping.

[39 : 31] But then he brought him over and what I was expecting was for him to go, Jesus? He didn't, though.

He held the baby up next to his cheek and said, Me. Me, Mama. Me. I looked at him, this little child of mine, and I said, Yes.

You. Yes, you, sweet baby boy of mine. You were made in the image of God. Yes, you. Yes, him.

And yes, me. And yes, you. You. Made in the image of God, no matter who we are, where we came from, what we look like, how old we are, strong, afraid, frail.

We were made in the image of God. Not only us, but our most difficult relative and annoying neighbor, the most resistant child or teenager or parent, a foreigner, a stranger, an other, we are each and all Jesus in the manger.

[40 : 58] We are not Jesus Christ. But as we look at baby Jesus and we think, why did he come? He came to show us the face of God.

And God looks at us and says, I made you in my image. This night, more than ever, may we look at each other.

May we look at each other and recognize that Jesus came so that a little boy and his mother, and indeed, all of us may know that we are made in the image of God.

And we celebrate this year after year after year. Why? Because we forget. We lose track.

We bring this ritual around every year. The candle lighting, the hymns, the carols, the lights, the music to remind us that no matter what life brings, no matter what feels frightening or mixed up or broken, falling apart, we get to hear these words, Jesus says, I am with you always.

[42 : 23] I am right there in it with you. We are called once a year to say, I believe.

I believe that Jesus came out. And I think about my little one and late that night after I tucked him in his crib upstairs on Christmas Eve.

I took the baby Jesus and held him in my hand. And I thought, you know, all there is to see, all there is to see is Jesus.

He has known us forever. He's known us forever and ever before that. He knows our names. He knows you and I.

He knows what we carry. He knows what we hide, what we long for, where the hurting places, where the joyful places are, yours and mine.

[43 : 37] And tonight, as we end Advent, the waiting is over. For unto us a Savior is born, and he is Christ, the Lord.

Christ, Christ, who came to call you by name. And if you don't remember some of the names that he calls you, let me tell you.

Jesus calls you friend. He says, you will never be rejected by me. Don't ever forget that. Jesus calls you saved.

Hear me. He says, you will never be condemned. You are not condemned. Do not condemn yourself or your neighbor. Saved.

Perfect and complete. Whole. And this is a lot of what we need to hear. We do not need to work for our self-worth. We do not need to work to be loved by God.

[44 : 40] You are, Jesus said, who I made you to be. You are enough. Forgiven. Hear me. You don't ever have to beat yourself up and you don't ever have to accept someone else's judgment on you because you are forgiven in Jesus' name.

And you are chosen. We each are chosen to be who we are, to have the gifts that we have.

And there is never a time, not now, not ever, into the future when you don't belong. This night and all the nights, it's the time when we don't just look at Jesus in the stable.

We don't just look in the steamy barn or cave where Jesus was born. We look for him in the faces around our tables, in the faces on the other side of Zoom or FaceTime.

We look for Jesus in the mirror, in the ones we love, in the ones we struggle to love.

[45 : 53] We look for him in the brokenness, in the adoption stories that are yours and mine because we're all an adoption story in faith, adopted by God through Jesus Christ who came as a baby boy.

As we lift our candles tonight, my hope is that not only will we hold our candle, but we will be holding that candle as a representation of Jesus who came to be the light of the world, that we should never be in the darkness, but know the truth.

You see, that little boy who brought me baby Jesus, he didn't come to me and say, me, like it was a question.

He came to me and said, me, mama, me. Truth, proclamation.

after our earlier service, I shared with some people that I got a text from him because he and his wife and their six-month-old, right, he was watching, were watching online from Ohio and the text said, it's me.

[47 : 24] It's me, mama. And then, of course, he added a picture of his baby son holding a candle and said that Charlie fell asleep through the whole service, but when silent night came, he was awake and he held his candle as any six-month-old might do that.

It's me. It's me, mama. It's me. It's you. Wherever you go, wherever you find yourself, you and I, we are made in the image of God and held in everlasting love forever.

And so, we come back again and again to receive from the table, to hear the word proclaimed, to hear the music, to remind us we are not lost, we are found.

May it be so. for its bods and The Lord be with you.

And also with you. Lift up your heart. We lift them up to the Lord. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is right to give our thanks and praise.

[49 : 08] In the beginning you created light to shine in the darkness. The light of each day reminds us that you are with us always. Bringing hope in the midst of fear.

On this night you remember the brilliant light of the star you set in the sky. Pointing to the sign of your love made flesh.

We look around with the flickering lights in this space. We are reminded that your spirit moves among us still. And so we proclaim this ancient song.

With all the saints and angels. 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. God of love for the foundation.

[50 : 12] God is faithful.

birth to your church and sealed a new covenant by water and the Spirit. With more anticipation and awe than any gift under our tree can give, we remember your gift of love and grace for all.

On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread. He gave thanks to you. He broke the bread. He gave it to his disciples and said, take and 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. He gave thanks to you. He gave it to his disciples and said, drink from this all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this often, remembering me.

And so as we celebrate the birth of hope anew, we proclaim the mystery of faith. Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

[51 : 37] Touch us, O God, with your transforming power. Open us to your promise of resurrection from fear and death. In receiving these elements, let us become your messengers of hope in an anxious world, in all that we say and do. Make us one in this purpose, O God, and make us one in your Son, Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray, saying, Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not to temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

I invite you to take this cup, and you may remove your mask carefully for these few minutes. And on one side, you'll see that there's a little cracker. I invite you to open it and take the cracker out, the body of Christ broken for you.

And the blood of Christ shed for you. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[54 : 13] Amen.

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

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Virgin, mother and child Holy infant so tender and mild Sleep in heavenly peace Sleep in heavenly peace Silent night, holy night Shepherds quick at the sight Glories stream from heaven afar Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia

Christ the Savior is born Christ the Savior is born Silent night, holy night Son of God, love's pure light Radiant beams from thy holy face With the dawn of redeeming grace Jesus, Lord, at thy birth Jesus, Lord, at thy birth Silent night, holy night

Wonder a star, land by light With the angels let us sing Alleluia to our King Christ the Savior is born Christ the Savior is born And now may the one who sent the stars And put them in the sky Take you from this place And fill you with love and grace

Thank you.