

2nd Sunday of Christmas – Year C

*Pr. Michael Jannett
Assistant to the Bishop for Formation and Communication
Southeastern Synod - ELCA*

Sunday, January 2, 2022

Jeremiah 31:7-14; **Psalm 147:12-20**; Ephesians 1:3-14; **JOHN 1:[1-9] 10-18**

A new calendar year is chance to start over

A clean slate, if you will

And should bring us HOPE and PROMISE,

but for many, that is not the case

They see shortcomings

A sense of optimism has crumbled

And been trampled upon

Or maybe now that “the holidays” are coming to a close, *that* has you tied up in knots...

Are you sad Christmas has come and gone?

Putting away the decorations?

Taking down the tree?

Maybe you are hungover from 2021, in general?

COVID, Tornadoes

School shootings

More black and brown siblings coming under fire, literally being killed

Or simply political debates and division may have you upset...

What ails YOU this day?

Perhaps your day seems dreary or dark?

Well, you are not alone!

Time after the holidays (and another year of COVID) leaves a void in our hearts

Especially with COVID’s third cousin on the rise

Somehow, though, we’ve adapted...

We’ve learned how to fight this virus

And to connect with others – to aid one another in our challenges

Time marches forward

We mark down on our calendars another Christmas...another NEW YEAR

And – as challenging as it can be – as clouded as the way might be
we move into 2022...

How do we escape the challenges of racism, COVID, and exhaustion?

Seems like we try to ESCAPE from the world

Escape from bigotry and hatred by withdrawing from society

Building bigger walls around our hearts and our bodies

Out of a sense of self-preservation or self-satisfaction

But in our text today...we hear about our God who decides

to MOVE INTO THE NEIGHBORHOOD

instead of choosing to withdraw from humanity

Indeed, God – the WORD MADE FLESH – makes an impact on all of humanity

By joining us in our brokenness

To become ONE with us
John 1 is the CHRISTMAS STORY in a different light
No manger...but God with us, nonetheless

God has been with us throughout time
God was present IN THE BEGINNING
Also, In Creation itself,
Then, in the Law and the Prophets...
And NOW, in the FLESH...
God is choosing to TABERNACLE with us
To set up a tent in our backyard
To move into the neighborhood

In the midst of our sorrows, and disease, and discomfort
God brings hope and a new light
A light that shines in our darkness
It shined before us, it shines WITH US,
And will shine LONG AFTER WE ARE GONE!

God – Immanuel – God with us
This is our hope and stay...
The challenges all around us, the challenges we wrestle with in our hearts
Are met by a God who chooses closeness
A God who chooses US

Instead of looking at the world and asking God, “WHY. DO YOU LET THIS HAPPEN?”
Instead, look at what Martin Luther says about our God who has come to be with us:
Luther writes:
See how God invites you in many ways. He places before you a babe with
whom you may take refuge. You cannot fear him, for nothing is more
appealing to a person than a babe. Are you afraid? Then come to him, lying in
the lap of the fairest and sweetest maid.

In a world full of struggles, God is still reaching out to us and finding ways to bring us together
In a world where we are ugly to one another, we can still find beauty
When we help a neighbor in need,
When we receive a card or call from a friend
Or when we simply make music
One gift I cherish is the ability to make song
From some wood and laquer and some metal strings
We can put forth love in the form of song...
As innocent and as sweet as a baby lying in a manger

Let this song come to you
Let this music be a God entering your hearts and minds this day...

God has moved into the neighborhood and is here to stay
That is our blessing this day.

AMEN