

Christmas Eve 2017

Isaiah 9: 2-7

Psalms 96

Titus 2:11-14

Luke 2:1-14

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Welcome in the name of our loving Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Take a breath!

The stores are closed. The phone isn't ringing. There's no television blaring... It's a peaceful quiet tonight. It seems like no matter what is going on in the world, in our home town, or even in our own lives, it seems that on this night, we are able to finally stop, take a breath and experience something different. True, honest peace. Peace that makes you stop what you're doing and turn around. Peace that makes you realize that we are all in this world together. Peace, that realizes the beauty of God's creation – given to us.

Shhh... can you feel it?

The stillness in your heart, the smile on your lips, the people beside you... Christmas is a special time of the year because we feel something different – people smile, and share good tidings, we let one another in line, we bake our favorites and someone else's! It is the one time of the year that we stop to appreciate – not of expensive gifts under the tree – but things far more important: family and loved ones.

Something more important was on Joseph and Mary's mind that first Christmas. Sure, registering for taxes was what had brought them to Bethlehem, but something more important was on the way. Not just any baby, but the One promised, the One that was to bring a new way of life. Not just for these proud parents but for the world. The decorations for that first Christmas were bundles of straw, starlight and a feed trough lined with baby blankets. And yet this rustic scene marked the greatest event in the history of humankind.

God's Son became one of us. God had promised to send a Messiah, one who would save His people. He could have easily burst on the scene as a full-grown man, a seven-foot warrior with fiery eyes and arms of steel. This was what many people were looking for, but it wasn't how God did it. He arrived in quietness, in peace, in the arms of a young woman. A totally vulnerable baby. The birthing was over, and we can imagine Mary and Joseph both let out a sign of relief and took a moment to simply imagine how this might be.

Imagining that things are possible, that things can be different is where we are called to begin. Do we dare to imagine alongside of the baby Christ that our world can be different? God came to show us the possibilities as we embrace change from the inside out.

Upsetting the status quo, juxtaposing the powerful, siding with the poor and vulnerable, God is conceived a new world of hospitality, equality, wellbeing for every single person. We're not here just to wait for God to enact the revolution, but to join in this hard work; change starts with us.

It's like that story from World War 1 about what happened on one Christmas Eve. When men in the trenches dared to imagine that they could set down their guns, ignore their orders, and break the darkness not with gunfire but, with song and fellowship. And as the story goes they did just that. The peace of Christmas was stronger than hatred, or nationality, or even fear - at least for that moment.

Shhh...can you imagine it.

Imagine if that peace, the peace we experience on this night, were to overflow into every night, into every argument, into every heart, into every city and classroom, boardroom, and village – that is the peace that Jesus Christ invites us to be a part of.

God gave His only Son so that we, in all our brokenness, could know this deep peace. He came so that we could know what love feels like, real love – love that never leaves, love that never disappoints, love that is never betrayed. If you can imagine love like that then that is where hope can begin and grow.

This Christmas sink into the beauty and mystery of the season. Enjoy your favorite foods, hold the hand of someone you love and let that peace you hear, and feel and imagine be the gift of Christ to you tonight and in the days to come.

Jesus is Born

Pat Bennet

Bennet, Pat. (2005). *Jesus is Born*. Burgess, Ruth (Ed.), Hay and Stardust. (P.60). Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications.

Jesus is born!

Formed in a womb and now a baby.

Jesus is born!

Swaddled and small, he sleeps in hay.

Setting aside his power and glory,

Homeless he enters human story:

Christ comes to earth.

Jesus is born!

Angels announce a joyful message.

Jesus is born!

“Peace on the earth and goodwill to all –

This is the hour God shows his favour,

Sending his Son, creation’s Saviour:”

Hope comes to earth.

Jesus is born!

High overhead a star is shining.

Jesus is born!

Earth houses uncreated light.

Now is the hold of darkness broken

As hearts and minds to god are opened:

Light comes to earth.

Jesus is born!

This night the world is changed for ever.

Jesus is born!

And in this babe for all to see

Love is revealed; God’s heart lies open

As the incarnate Word is spoken:

God comes to earth.