
Grace and Peace to you all from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ – Amen.

A huge word of thanks to our young people for sharing their gifts in telling the Christmas story through the Huron Carol. As we heard this hymn was written to help tell the story of Christ's birth for the first peoples of this land.

And this morning we hear another message in our gospel – from John the Baptist – using imagery that would have been helpful for people during that first century. Words that are preparing us for the coming of Jesus and for the type of ministry he would bring to our world. And through his words John asks us to wait for Christ – but in a very different way. He asks us to wait by putting our gloves on and getting to work! John says – prepare the way for Jesus – fill in the rough spots of our road, clear and pave the way! And as you do make sure to tell everyone about this important coming day!

Of course John wasn't asking us or his people to join a construction crew to literally pave the way for Jesus coming – but he is calling us all to take part in the hard work of God's coming kingdom. Smoothing out the bumps in our world – to make it easier for all people to access their daily needs. Helping to make sure everyone has a place where they can be welcomed into community. And calling us to find ways to sharing God's message of love in new and exciting ways.

And just like the Huron Carol – John gives us another way to think about Emmanuel - God with us - coming into this world. A way that calls us not just to wait for things to happen, but a way that calls us to actively help welcome God's Love and welcome into this world.

So I thought this morning we could spend some time thinking about what this Christmas story might look like for us today – and how others have come to imagine this story across every time and space. Here is an image you may have seen. Its titled *Jose Y Maria* and was created by Everett Patterson in 2014.



Jose Y Maria
By Everett Patterson

The artist said he was inspired by a number of troubling images he had seen in the news of migrant families seeking shelter and refuge. The main goal of the creation was to spark a conversation around what the Holy Family might look like today - as well as to pack in as many clever biblical references into the scene as possible. So I thought we could play some eye spy to figure out which references to the Christmas story you can see?

- Dave's City Motel sign – King David's City
- No Vacancy - No room in the inn

- New Manager missing a – New manger
- Star advertisement – star led people to baby Jesus
- Verse from the prophet Ezekiel in the graffiti on the phone kiosk
- Sticker of Gloria on the phone post.
- The way “save more” behind Mary’s head looks like “Ave Maria!”
- The advertisements in the paper for Glad and tide
- The advertisement in the paper for Shepherd Watches
- Tiny Green Plant between Jose and Maria – Shoot of Jesse
- Wisemen advertisement on store
- Good news advertisement on store
- Maria is on a horse / donkey
- Maria hoodie says she is from Nazareth High school
- Maria is pregnant
- Joseph is trying to find them a place to stay by looking through the phone book.

The perspective of the piece can also be telling for us too – we come to this seen as if from a car window passing by or from a restaurant across the street. We are not in the middle of this seen but we observe it from the safety and warmth of our own privilege. This piece hopes to help us shift our thoughts as we see people who are “down and out” living with homelessness or are in poverty. A real reminder that our Savior’s parents (and Jesus himself) were once similarly troubled.

So as we continue to wait during this Advent season – I think it’s important for us to think about how we will tell this wonderful and amazing story of Jesus birth. And how will we come to look for Christ and the holy family within our own community’s and neighborhoods.

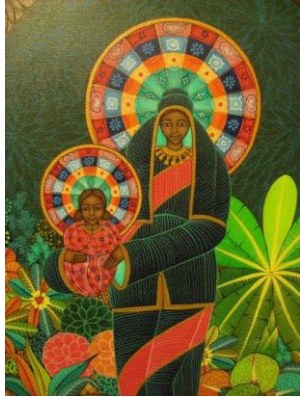
As we think about these questions I wanted to share with you a few images of the Holy Family from around the world that will likely be very different than the ones we are used to seeing. Images that remind us of Jesus coming not just for us here in Edmonton – but for all peoples, across all cultures, and places – and of a story that can come to be told in many different ways around the world.

So as we go through the images take note of which ones touch you.

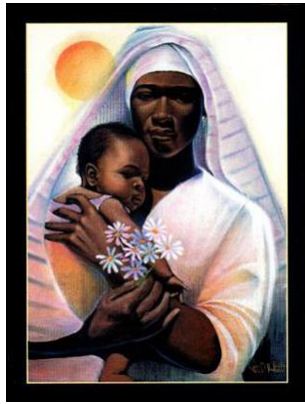
Which ones draw you in.

And which ones have invited you to see the story of Christ’s coming in a new way.

Following the viewing I’ll give you some time to share about your experience of the images within a small group.



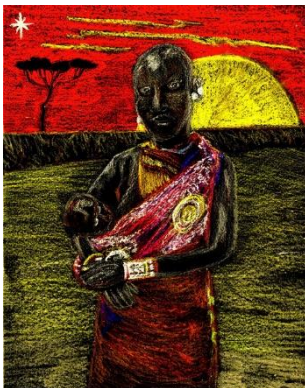
Haitian Madonna and Child
by Ismael Sain-cil-us



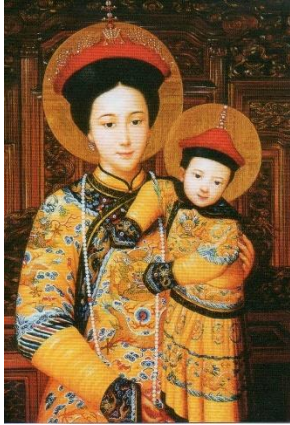
The Child and Madonna
By Keith Mallett



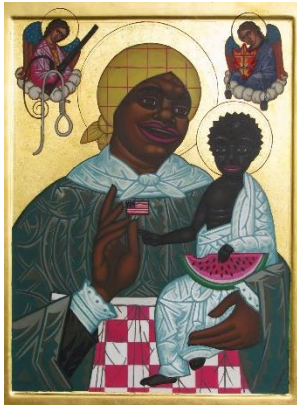
Holy Family
by Kelly Latimore



Massia Madonna and Child
By Stu-shie



Our Lady of China and Child
Artist Unknown



The Holy Mammy and Child and the Instruments of their Dreams
Artist Unknown



Our Lady of Japan
Artist Unknown



Mary and Christ
by Satheesan A.K.

So I will invite you to get together in small groups of 2-4 people to share about the image you have just seen. If you do not wish to share that is more than okay, but find a group you can help listen within to hear others experiences.

Share your name and then share about an image that drew you in some way.

(5min sharing)

Does anyone wish to share something about the images they experienced with the larger group?

Closing prayer:

Emmanuel – God with us,

In this season of waiting, we look for signs of you. Ways your love, joy, hope, and peace is breaking into our world to make us new. Help us as we prepare for your coming to share your good news – an old and cherished story that is always being renewed – Amen.