

Sermon for Christmas Day
December 25, 2005
St. Mary of the Hills, Blowing Rock, NC
The Reverend Jeanne Finan

We Haven't Missed It

Merry Christmas!

This morning really feels like that wonderful scene
in Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*
where Scrooge runs to the window and opens it
and puts out his head.:

No fog, no mist, clear, bright...

[okay, so maybe that isn't quite like Blowing Rock this morning!–but stay with me, okay?}

...jovial, stirring, cold;

cold, piping for the blood to dance to;

Golden sunlight; Heavenly sky; sweet fresh air; merry bells.

Oh, glorious. Glorious!

"What's to-day?" cried Scrooge, calling downward to a boy in Sunday clothes...

"Eh?" returned the boy, with all his might of wonder.

"What's to-day, my fine fellow?" said Scrooge.

"To-day?" replied the boy. "Why, Christmas Day."

"It's Christmas Day!" said Scrooge... "I haven't missed it

We haven't missed it!!!

We have waited and watched through the weeks of Advent
and here it is–Christmas Day.

This morning we heard read the words of the prophet Isaiah...

*How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger
who announces peace,
who brings good news...*

The young boy shouting up to the window,
responding to Scrooge's question that morning,
he was the messenger,
bringing peace and good news
that Christmas day.

You have not missed Christmas, Scrooge.

There is still hope.
There is still possibility.
There is still time for you—and for me, for us.

If you know the story,
Ebenezer Scrooge has had a terrifying and heart wrenching night,
wrestling with his own demons,
the demons of sorrow and regret from his past,
the demons of the hard truth of his present day bitterness
and miserliness,
and the terrifying demons of his future,
if he continues to refuse
the love that is being offered to him.

That dark night of the soul,
opens Scrooge's eyes and heart to a new day, to a new life,
to hope in all its light filled brilliance—
and that is what Christmas offers us as well.
New life, hope,
the gift of God's immense and ever present love...
if we will just open the window.

And love has come--
in the shape and form of a human baby.
A baby named Jesus.
A baby who has come into the world to live among us,
a baby who will grow and become known as Christ,
Savior, Messiah.

This baby,
this new life brings hope and possibility.

This baby
comes to live among us,
to change us, to transform us
through love.

The first chapter in John's gospel
is sometimes described as being like the overture to a symphony—
everything we really need to know is in that first chapter—
and written so beautifully—
it does indeed fall upon our ears and our hearts
like beautiful music.

*In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.*

The beauty and mystery of these words grab our attention.
This is the voice that calls to us in our wilderness,
shouts to us to fling open our windows
and to cry out,
What's today?

And if we can be bold enough to ask that question,
we will hear a voice call back to us—
regardless of the date on the calendar--
Why today is Christ's day!
Today is Christ's- mass.
Christmas.

That is why we are here this morning.

*All things came into being through him,
and without him not one thing came into being*

John McQuiston, reflecting on the Benedictine way of living,
writes in his little book *Always We Begin Again*:

*All is given out of the mystery
that called us into being,
and of which we are.¹*

All is given.
All is given
out of the mystery
that called us into being.

It is not just Madison Avenue marketing
that has made Christmas the season of giving.

We give gifts to those we love
because we ourselves have been given an amazing gift.
The gift of Jesus.
The gift of being loved.
The gift of each and every one of us
being claimed as God's adored children.

Out of the mystery.

Believe it or not,
there is room in that tiny little manger for all of us.
Have you ever noticed—

¹ John McQuiston II, *Always We Begin Again: The Benedictine Way of Living*, (Morehouse Publishing, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, 1996), page 49.

in most creche scenes, in paintings, in sculpture, in stained glass--
that baby Jesus's arms are almost always wide open.
Wide open.

Christmas Day is a day when the light of the morning shines beyond bright
(and that is regardless of the weather!!)

This is the day that reminds us
that the light does, and has, and always will
shine in the darkness.

This is the day that tells us
there is NO darkness
that can possibly overcome this light.

*The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness did not overcome it.*

Charles Dickens concludes his tale of Christmas morning with these words:

*Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all, and infinitely more;
and to Tiny Tim, who did not die, he was a second father.
He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man,
as the good old city knew,
or any other good old city, town, or borough,
in the good old world.
Some people laughed to see the alteration in him,
but he let them laugh, and little heeded them;
for he was wise enough to know
that nothing ever happened on this globe, for good,
at which some people did not have
their fill of laughter in the outset;
and knowing that such as these would be blind anyway,
he thought it quite as well that they should wrinkle up their eyes in
grins,
as have the malady in less attractive forms.
His own heart laughed:
and that was quite enough for him.
... and it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well,
if any man alive possessed the knowledge.
May that be truly said of us, and all of us!*

This is the day we proclaim with all rejoicing,
Glory to the Father,
and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit:
as it was in the beginning,
is now,

and will be forever.

God bless us, Every One!
Amen.

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