

Christmas Day B December 25 2020
Luke 2:1-20
St Peter's Lutheran Church Elizabeth
Greg Bensted

Hope, faith, joy, and peace to you from God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

"To you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." Let's pray:

I don't intend to try to explain Christmas this morning. I don't know how. It just doesn't make sense. The gift of Christmas can't be explained or understood by logic, the rational mind, or our various theologies and doctrines. It can only be experienced, and that's what I want us to do today. I want us to experience Christmas.

So we're going to do this a little differently this morning. I'm going to ask you to do something. I'll do it first and then I want you to do it. It may sound a little strange or unusual but I hope you will indulge me. I think it will make sense. Do you trust me? Are you ready? (Look at someone and say, "Yes").

Did you see what I did? I looked at _____ and said, "Yes." That's all I want you to do. Turn to someone near you, look at them, and simply say, "Yes." Pass it down the pew. I don't want anyone here to miss out on a yes. Make sure everyone gets a yes. It doesn't matter who you are, why you're here, or what you believe or don't believe; everyone gets a yes.

Now, why did I get you to do that? What just happened? Beloved of God, you just received what the shepherds received on that holy night. You received and passed on the good news that the angel spoke. You just experienced the Christmas story. You just experienced the "Yes" of God's peace and goodwill toward all whom he favours. Acceptance is the story behind God's yes.

This Child we receive and celebrate this morning is the sign of God's yes to you and me. This Child is the embodiment of God's yes to all people. This Child will spend the rest of his life saying, "Yes": yes to the poor, yes to the hungry, yes to the weeping, yes to the sinner, yes to the pure in heart, yes to those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, yes to the peacemakers, yes to the outsiders, yes to the wedding couple who ran out of wine, yes to the lepers, yes to the prostitutes and tax collectors, yes to the hungry multitudes, yes to the demon possessed, yes to the woman caught in adultery, yes to Lazarus, yes to the woman at the well, yes to blind Bartimaeus, yes to the haemorrhaging woman, yes to the centurion's servant, yes to the widows, yes to the paralysed man, yes to the sick and suffering, yes to Nicodemus, yes to Mary and Martha, yes to Peter, James, and John, yes to Thomas, yes to Judas, and yes to you and me.

Jesus is God's yes to us and the world. Regardless of who you are, where you're from, what you've done or left undone, or what is happening in your life today, you get a yes. There is no one who misses out on getting a yes.

That yes is the gift of Christmas and it's unconditional. It's pure gift. That yes comes to us as life, light, healing, love, hope, mercy, forgiveness, beauty, generosity, kindness, acceptance, forgiveness, and presence. And God's yes to you and me comes without an if, a but, a when, or a why; it's free of obligation. God's yes, the Christmas gift, never comes wrapped in an economy of transaction. God's yes is pure gift.

We live in a world in which you pay for what you want. We're expected to return the favour, pay off the debt, or reciprocate in some way. We write contracts to ensure that the books will remain balanced. In short, we get what we pay for. That's not God's world or God's way.

God doesn't love you because you're worthy of being loved. God loves unconditionally. God doesn't accept you because you've proven yourself in some way to be acceptable. God's acceptance is unconditional. God doesn't forgive you after you've changed your ways. God just forgives. God doesn't show up because you say your prayers or have enough faith. God is always present before you even think to pray and he gives and sustains faith.

There are no prerequisites to God's yes. That's the gift of this morning; God's unconditional yes.

It's sort of like the story of a man and his little granddaughter. A man drops in unexpectedly to visit his granddaughter and she asks, "Grandpa, why are you here?" "Because I love you," he says. "But why?" she asks. "Because I just do," he replies. "But why?" she asks again. "It's just what I do," he answers. "I can't not love you." Her little face beams with joy and she can't stop smiling. She has heard her grandpa's yes, his unconditional yes. She understands that there is no why to her grandpa's love. He simply loves her.

That's Christmas. That's what baby Jesus lying in the manger brings us. That's why we celebrate this day like no other but Easter. That's why we come here this day every year. We come to remember, to be reminded of, and to hear once again, God's everlasting yes to us. That's the Christmas song and it plays for everyone regardless of their station in life.

"Yes, yes, yes." Can you hear it? "Yes, yes, yes." Sing along with it. "Yes, yes, yes." And that, the angel says, is "Good news of great joy for all the people."

Merry Christmas, everyone. Amen.

And the yes of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.