

St. Martin-in-the-Fields Episcopal Church

Keller, Texas

Sermon for Christmas Eve ~ December 24, 2020

The Very Reverend Ronald D. Pogue

During the Advent season, I have shared with this community of faith some of the things I want to give God this year: First, I want to give God my undivided attention. Then, I want to give God a life that tastes as good as it sounds. Next, I want to give God my trust. Finally, I want to give God my obedience.

Tonight, I want to complete the list of things I want to give God this year: I especially want to give God glory and praise.

It is easy for some of us to live our lives in the eye of others so that we receive our share, or more than our share, of attention. When that happens, it is easy to begin to think it is deserved. Christmas calls us back to the Judean hillsides and plops us down among those shepherds who heard the angels song: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace and goodwill to all people.” Tonight, God tears open the skies for us and the angel hosts sing to him “glory!” And, to us, they sing “peace and goodwill.” It's a simple song and a simple message: Glory is for God and peace and goodwill is for us.

When we forget that, which, from the looks of things happens quite often, we tend to get the tables turned so that we think we get the glory and God is entitled to peace and goodwill in the heavenly places with all those souls we no longer have to cope with. Glory to God in the highest. And peace and goodwill to God's people on earth. This year, I want the tables to be turned back the way God intended. I want to give God Glory and praise. And I want peace and goodwill for you and me. You know, I believe the Word became flesh and lived among us to turn the tables so that God gets glory and praise and we get peace and goodwill. People who wanted glory put him on a cross. We still do.

Listen to these words of Nathan Mitchell: “Christmas calls a community back to its origins by remembering Jesus' own beginnings as a human child, a prophet of God's reign, a judgment on the world and its projects. What the parish celebrates during this season is not primarily a birthday, but the beginning of a decisive new phase in the tempestuous history of God's hunger for human companions. The social concerns of the season are thus rooted in Jesus' proclamation of God's reign: the renunciation of patterns that oppress others and the formation of a new human community that voluntarily embraces those renunciations.”

This year, I want to give God glory and praise. And, as always, God wants to give all people on earth peace and goodwill. That is the essence of salvation! Maybe if I get out of the glory business there'll be room for us to live and work together more effectively for peace and goodwill.

If you will join me in giving God glory and praise, a mystery will occur. The heavens will light up and we will be drawn closer together in communion. In this communion we will experience peace and good-will. We will know for ourselves the meaning of salvation.

Someone has wisely said, “The best way to send a message is to wrap it in a person.” That's what we have in the Incarnation. The Word did not become a philosophy, a theory, or a concept to be discussed, debated, or pondered. But the Word became a person to be followed, enjoyed, and loved! So, let us dance with delight in the Lord and let our hearts be filled with rejoicing, for eternal salvation has appeared on the earth. Alleluia!