

Christmas Eve 2020 December 24, 2020

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

When I was a little kid, I hated going to bed at night because I was always afraid I was going to miss something. I was convinced that something exciting was going to happen while I was in bed, and I'd miss out. Sometimes I think adults have the same mentality—we have to do it all and have it all so we don't miss out on anything in life. In fact, this mentality is so common that it's become a meme on the internet, dubbed, "Fear of missing out." Perhaps this is why our lives these days are so busy. People don't often just sit and relax anymore. Even in our so-called "downtime" we have to be doing something. Quite often in the evenings, I find myself spending my "downtime" watching tv and playing games on my phone at the same time. Even in my "downtime," one activity wasn't enough.

Life is busy. It is full of activities of all kinds: work, school, housekeeping, shopping, meetings, and so much more. These activities fill our calendar, and they fill our lives. And our downtime is just as busy as the rest of our lives. Prior to COVID, vacations were often seen as more exhausting than daily life, to the point that people would return from vacation claiming that they needed a vacation *from* their vacation because their time away was not restful and refreshing. We are always on the go, always doing something, always busy.

Amidst the pandemic, maybe we've exchanged one set of activities for a different set. Things like travel, social gatherings, sports, movies, concerts, and holiday parties aren't really available to us right now, but reading books, sewing or knitting, playing games, visiting with others on Zoom, surfing the internet and arguing about politics are all available and time-consuming activities right now.

For many people, our lives are, in fact, so busy that there is *no room left for Jesus in our world*. We have become so wrapped up in our activities that Jesus gets pushed to the back of our mind, often replaced during the Christmas season with decorating, shopping, parties and Santa.

There is no room for Jesus in our world today, *just like* there was no room for Jesus in Bethlehem. It seems as though Mary *was forced* to be on the go. Maybe she was prepared to have her baby. But then, plans had to be changed because Emperor Augustus called for a census to be taken, and Mary and Joseph had to follow orders. Mary couldn't just stay put in Nazareth until her baby was born. Instead she and Joseph had to pack up and travel a great distance to Bethlehem. They ended up in Joseph's hometown of Bethlehem where there was no room for them to stay. Crowded and busy, all the guest rooms were full in Joseph's family.

So, Mary found herself giving birth to her son in a stable, and lying him in a manger—the trough from which the cows and horses would eat. There was no room for them in the house. There was no room for Jesus to come into the world. But Jesus came anyway.

Maybe we don't have time for Jesus in our daily lives, maybe there is no room for Jesus in our world or in Bethlehem. But thankfully, God doesn't wait for us to be ready, and God doesn't wait for us to make room. God comes to us even in the midst of our busy lives, in the midst of our chaos, in the midst of a pandemic, and into a world where there is no room. God comes to us, even when we have no room for God. God breaks into our lives, pushing aside all that stands in the way of our relationship with God.

On a planet that is broken by the injustices of hunger, illness, poverty, and violence, Christ breaks into our world.

In a society that is becoming *less* populated by people who identify as Christian or religious and *more* populated by those who identify as Atheist or unsure, Christ breaks into the world.

On a day that is often driven by frantic shopping, last minute wrapping, frenzied cleaning, and endless cooking and baking, Christ breaks into our world.

In lives that are scheduled every minute of every day, lives where the calendar dictates every moment, and there is no time for Jesus, Christ breaks into our world.

In hearts and minds that are *occupied* by politics, the coronavirus, and all the other “stuff” of life, in hearts and minds where there is no room, Christ breaks into our world.

Even when there is no room in our lives or in the world for God, God comes to us as our Savior when we need it most. God comes to us, bringing hope for all the world.

This child that is born isn't just any baby. This child is special, and we know it from the start. Maybe there's no room for Jesus to be *born*, but the moment he comes into the world you can sense the excitement. Suddenly this child is not just Mary's child, but this child belongs to all the world. The angels come to the shepherds and proclaim to them: “To *YOU* is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is the Messiah, the Lord.” Having heard the news, the shepherds go to welcome the baby who is born *for them*. Having heard the news that Christ is born *for us* this day, we gather to worship this child who God has promised will save the world. We gather to worship the child who is the one we have hoped and waited for.

And so we have hope. We have hope that God is present in the midst of the pandemic. We have hope that God is present in the midst of injustice. We have hope that God continues to speak to those who are hungry and those who are victims of oppression and violence. We have hope that in the midst of all the chaotic and busy times in our lives, Christ still comes to us and becomes the center of our lives. We have hope. We have such strong hope that it pulls us away from our daily lives this night so that we can pause and worship. So that we can celebrate. So that we can give thanks to God for God's saving action in this world. This is a hope that causes shepherds to leave their sheep in the fields. It's a hope that there *is* a Savior, and that this world *will* change, and that ultimately, the child who is born to us this day will be the one who changes it.

And so that is why we celebrate this night. Lying in the manger is the hope of the world. In the manger is the one who has come to save us. In the manger is the one who comes to make all things new.

On this Christmas night, we celebrate that Christ comes to us. Christ makes a home in each of us, even when it seems like there is no room. And we celebrate that Christ is our hope and our salvation. The angels proclaim to the shepherds and to each one of us: “To *YOU* is born this day in the city of David a *Savior* who is the *Messiah*, the *Lord*.” Thanks be to God. Amen.