

## **Christmas 1 - December 27, 2015 – John Prologue**

### **Rev. Laura Blazek**

There are some gospel readings that are an entire sermon in themselves. Today's reading from John is one of those. Every time I am asked to preach on the opening of the gospel John I always feel compelled to just say, "Amen," and then sit down. It is difficult to add anything to words such as these that caress the soul and embrace it in a hug full of warmth of love.

But there are those of us who don't or can't feel Christ's love that reaches out to embrace us and to fill our hearts with joy and light. Some of us don't feel worthy of that love. Even as Christ reaches out to us we take a step back. We might even put up our hand saying, "Don't come any closer." Perhaps we even turn our backs and walk away. Our burdens too heavy, our sins too great, our pain too deep to truly believe that anyone, particularly God and Christ himself, could love us unconditionally, could love the broken shell we have become.

John tells us that from Christ we have received grace upon grace. But, it is we who must believe it. Because until we believe it, until we believe that we are worthy of the unconditional love that Christ offers, we will continue to walk in the darkness even though Christ's light shines all around us.

Believing that Christ's light shines all around us is also hard to believe in a world that gives up on us, because in the eyes of the world we are too broken to be worthy of attention. When you are constantly told that aren't worth anything, it is hard to believe otherwise.

So, if you hear nothing else this morning, please hear this, you are worth everything and Christ doesn't and won't give up on you. Christ was there in the beginning. You came into being through Him. You are a child of God, worthy of love. And if, like Mary and Joseph, He has to knock on every door in Bethlehem to find a home in your heart, Christ will keep knocking until you open your heart to Him. The place you give Him doesn't have to be large or even pristine, after all Christ was born in a stable and laid in a manger of hay from which the animals ate. You just have to give His love a little room and it will grow. Christ is love, and it is that love that rings through the words of John.

It is a love that fills us even if we don't understand it. Last week, the youth group sat around making pillows for the Christmas dinner and we watched "A Charlie Brown Christmas". It is a great show. You can't help but feel a little happier, a little lighter watching Snoopy's antics. And when Schroeder plays the Peanuts theme song who doesn't feel themselves start to dance a little? But there is a sadness there too as we watch Charlie Brown's internal struggle to understand the love that fills him when he feels so lost and alone.

Charlie Brown tells Linus, “I think there must be something wrong with me, Linus. Christmas is coming but I don’t feel happy. I don’t feel the way I’m supposed to feel.”

Christmas is a wonderful time full of celebration, but it is one of those times that also emphasizes in a smack-you-in-the-face sort of way that you are alone or different or unwanted. The well-worn chair next to yours that now sits empty reminds you of loved ones that are no longer here to share in the joy of Christmas. The mail box filled only with junk mail and bills, day after day, throughout December reminds you of the emptiness in your life. Sitting on the couch munching on leftovers as you scroll through Facebook posts of friends parties reminds you of the loneliness you feel each and every day. We go through the motions, pretending, but unhappy all the same.

At some point in our lives, we have all been Charlie Brown, feeling lost and alone, desperately trying to understand what Christmas is about. It is at that those times we must learn that we are never truly alone. It is in the middle of our loneliness that we need to remember that Christmas is about the love of God and Christ. Linus tells us what Christmas is about. It is about Christ being born in a stable and becoming one of us. John also tells us what Christmas is about. It is about a love so large that heaven and earth are joined so that we become children of God and are loved for just being who we are.

No matter how alone we feel, we are never alone because Christ is with us always.

No matter how unworthy we feel, we are worthy because Christ fills our hearts with the love of God that is for all people.

We all need a little love to grow and to thrive. Christ is the love that fills the emptiness, fills the loneliness, bringing us hope and peace and joy. Christ is the true light that enlightens everyone, and it is through us that Christ’s light is shared with the world.

Amen.