

"LET'S CELEBRATE: JESUS CHRIST IS THE WAY!"

LUKE 2:10-11; JOHN 14:6

CHRISTMAS DAY

MESSIAH, BOERNE

DECEMBER 25, 2023

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

READ TEXT: "BUT THE ANGEL SAID TO THEM, 'DO NOT BE AFRAID. I BRING YOU GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY THAT WILL BE FOR ALL THE PEOPLE. TODAY IN THE TOWN OF DAVID A SAVIOR HAS BEEN BORN TO YOU; HE IS CHRIST THE LORD'" (LK 2:10-11), AND "JESUS ANSWERED, 'I AM THE WAY AND THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE. NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER EXCEPT THROUGH ME'" (JN 14:6).

DEAR FRIENDS IN CHRIST:

THIS MORNING WE CELEBRATE THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST, EVEN AS LONG AGO ANGELS AND SHEPHERDS ADORED HIM (VV 10-11, 14; 15-17) AND WISE MEN WORSHIPED HIM (MT 2:11). IN FACT, TODAY WE JOIN IN THE CELEBRATION OF JESUS' BIRTH WITH CHRISTIANS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD AS HYMNS AND CAROLS ARE SUNG IN CHURCHES AND HOMES ALIKE AND PEOPLE PRAY FOR PEACE AND GOODWILL AMONG HUMANKIND. AS CHRISTIANS, WE CARE ABOUT THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE, THOSE WHO ARE HUNGRY AND IN NEED, WHO SEEK RELIEF FROM EVIL AND WRONGDOING, AND WHO HUNGER AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HUMAN DIGNITY FOR ALL PEOPLE. THESE UNFULFILLED NEEDS AND DESIRES REVEAL A LOST WORLD WANTING TO RETURN HOME TO THE FATHER'S HOUSE, BUT HOW? IN OUR TEXT THIS MORNING, JESUS SAYS, "I AM THE WAY AND THE

TRUTH AND THE LIFE. NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER EXCEPT THROUGH ME" (JN 14:6). TODAY WE CELEBRATE THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST, THE WAY, THE ONLY WAY, TO THE FATHER.

EARLY CHRISTIANS IN THE MIDDLE EAST WERE KNOWN AS FOLLOWERS OF "THE WAY." THEY BELIEVED AND CONFESSED THAT THE BABY, BORN IN BETHLEHEM, CRUCIFIED IN JERUSALEM, AND RISEN FROM THE DEAD WAS THE WAY. HE WAS THE ANSWER TO HUMANITY'S GREATEST NEED: THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS. THERE WAS SALVATION IN NO ONE ELSE. IN FACT, THEY WILLINGLY SUFFERED PERSECUTION—EVEN DEATH—RATHER THAN DEPART FROM "THE WAY."

THIS ONLY WAY, JESUS, CONCEIVED IN NAZARETH AND BORN IN BETHLEHEM, WE CELEBRATE TODAY. IT'S A LONG ROAD FROM ANGELS BEARING A FLAMING SWORD OF JUDGMENT AGAINST OUR FIRST PARENTS IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN TO ANGELS ANNOUNCING GOOD NEWS FOR ALL PEOPLE AT BETHLEHEM. YET IT'S A PATH TROD BY PROPHETS, BY MARY AND JOSPEH, BY SHEPHERDS, BY WISE MEN, BY APOSTLES AND BLOODSTAINED MARTYRS, BY PASTORS AND TEACHERS AND SAINTS PREPARING THE WAY FOR US TO MEET THE LORD JESUS, HIMSELF "THE WAY." AND CHRIST IS HERE WITH US THIS HOLY DAY, AT THIS VERY MOMENT, ACCORDING TO HIS PROMISE: "WHERE TWO OR THREE COME TOGETHER IN MY NAME, THERE I AM AMONG THEM" (MT 18:20).

BUT WHAT IF THERE WERE NO WAY BACK TO THE FATHER?
HOW WOULD WE EVER FIND HIM? WOULD HE FIND US, OR WOULD WE
BE LOST AND DOOMED FOREVER? WOULD THERE BE ANYTHING TO
CELEBRATE AT CHRISTMAS TIME?

THE PROPHET ISAIAH WRITES: "WE ALL, LIKE SHEEP, HAVE
GONE ASTRAY, EACH OF US HAS TURNED TO HIS OWN WAY. . ." (IS
53:6a). ST. PAUL SAYS IT MORE CLEARLY: "ALL HAVE SINNED
AND FALL SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD" (ROM 3:23). EVEN THE
FIRST COUPLE, MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE, COULD NOT BE SAVED ON
THEIR OWN. ADAM AND EVE WOULD HAVE REJOICED THIS MORNING
TO HEAR THE ANGELS' ANNOUNCEMENT, "I BRING YOU GOOD NEWS OF
. . . A SAVIOR, WHO IS CHRIST THE LORD," RATHER THAN SEE
THE ANGEL GUARDING THE WAY TO THE TREE OF LIFE IN THE
GARDEN OF EDEN WITH A FLAMING SWORD.

WHAT ABOUT SOME OTHER HEROS OF THE FAITH? WERE WE TO
APPEAL TO FATHER ABRAHAM, "THE FRIEND OF GOD" (JAMES 2:23),
TO INTERCEDE FOR US, WE WOULD SEE ONE LIKE US, IMPATIENT
AND SEEKING TO GET HIS OWN WAY IN ORDER TO HAVE A CHILD.
WERE WE TO ASK MOSES TO INTERCEDE FOR US, THE MEEKEST MAN
ON EARTH (NUM 12:3) AND THE ONE MAN WITH WHOM GOD SPOKE
FACE TO FACE (EX 33:11), WE WOULD SEE ONE WHO WAS DENIED
ENTRY INTO THE PROMISED LAND BECAUSE OF HIS DISOBEDIENCE.
AND WHAT ABOUT DAVID, THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART (1 SAM

13:14)? IF WE WERE TO LOOK TO HIM AS OUR INTERCESSOR, WE WOULD ONLY FIND A VICTIM OF HIS OWN LUST AND SCHEMING IN ADULTERY, LYING, AND MURDER. THE FACT IS, NONE OF THE GREATEST OF GOD'S WORKERS FROM THE PAST, NOR ANY AMONG US TODAY, COULD REDEEM HIM OR HERSELF OR ANOTHER HUMAN BEING (PS 49:7-8). THEY, TOO, WOULD CELEBRATE THIS MORNING BECAUSE THERE IS A WAY OF WHOM THE ANGELS SING!

TODAY WE CELEBRATE THAT GOD DID NOT LEAVE US LOST AND ALONE, BUT CAME IN THE FLESH AND PROVIDED A WAY FOR US TO RETURN TO HIM. GOD EVEN GIVES US A SPECIAL SIGN TO FIND THE WAY: "'BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL CONCEIVE AND BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL'—WHICH MEANS, 'GOD WITH US'" (MT 1:23).

MARY AND JOSEPH DESERVE A SPECIAL PLACE IN OUR HEART. AS ELIZABETH SAID, MARY WAS "BLESSED . . . AMONG WOMEN" (LK 1:42). SHE WILLINGLY CONSENTED TO BECOME THE INSTRUMENT OF THE LORD, THE MOTHER OF GOD'S ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON. SHE SAID, "I AM THE SERVANT OF THE LORD. MAY IT BE TO ME AS YOU HAVE SAID" (LK 2:38), AND HER SPIRIT REJOICED IN GOD HER SAVIOR (LK 2:47). JOSEPH, HER HUSBAND, AT FIRST WONDERED WHEN HE LEARNED HIS BETROTHED WAS PREGNANT, BUT ONCE ASSURED BY THE ANGEL OF THE LORD IN A DREAM THAT THE CHILD WAS GOD'S SON, HE PROVIDED HIS BEST FOR MOTHER AND CHILD (MT 1:19-20). OF

THIS CHILD THE PROPHET SAID: "FOR UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN,
TO US A SON IS GIVEN, AND THE GOVERNMENT WILL BE ON HIS
SHOULDERS. AND HE WILL BE CALLED WONDERFUL COUNSELOR,
MIGHTY GOD, EVERLASTING FATHER, PRINCE OF PEACE" (IS 9:6).

JESUS HIMSELF GIVES US THE GREATEST REASON FOR
CELEBRATION THIS MORNING IN HIS HIGH PRIESTLY PRAYER: "NOW
THIS IS ETERNAL LIFE: THAT THEY MAY KNOW YOU, THE ONLY TRUE
GOD, AND JESUS CHRIST WHOM YOU HAVE SENT" (JN 17:3).

THAT'S WHY WE CELEBRATE.

DEAR FRIENDS IN CHRIST, WE CAME HERE THIS MORNING
READY TO CELEBRATE GOD'S WAY TO US AND OUR WAY BACK TO HIM
THROUGH THE BABY BORN IN BETHELEHEM, JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.
EACH OF US CAME WITH HIS OR HER OWN THOUGHTS, NEEDS, AND
DESIRES, AND TO EACH OF US, GOD GIVES THE APPROPRIATE
MESSAGE. TO YOU AND ME, JESUS' FOLLOWERS, GOD'S ANGEL
SAYS, "A SAVIOR HAS BEEN BORN TO YOU; HE IS CHRIST THE
LORD" (LK 2:11), AND JESUS SAYS, "I AM THE WAY AND THE
TRUTH AND THE LIFE. NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER EXCEPT
THROUGH ME" (JN 14:6). AMEN.