
 International House of Prayer of Greater Fort Wayne

 ...a day and night , city-wide, multi-church prayer and worship ministry

So its over...or is it?

By now just about all of us have heard this familiar question *‘how was your Christmas?’* While I understand what is being asked, and please don’t hear the idea that it is a wrong question, the underlying assumption is that Christmas is over. Christmas was last year- right? It’s a past event and Lord willing there will be one next year. The point- in this question is the assumption of a past event. Now most all of us can relate to the fact that we are event driven, we tend to live our lives from one event to the next. Our days are full of events - my closing words of the day to my wife often sound like this - ‘what do you have going tomorrow?’ If we don’t have stuff on the calendar we often say something like, “Nothing is going on that day,” or “I am not doing anything that day,” Isn’t that a fascinating commentary? Its as if there is no life, nothing to learn or discover, nothing to experience, without an event.

So the question points to an event and then gives an invitation for an evaluation of that event. How was your Christmas and of course the kind response is ‘good’. **But why is that?** The quick answer - that is the cultural narrative we hold dear; *progress and success*. I have noticed over the past few years that Xerox Christmas letters have been replaced - you know those two paged letters that we would give and receive in Christmas cards. In the early years they were literally black and white copied pictures onto plain black and white paper that would give a run down of happenings in the life of friends or family. Later there were those who used color and then color paper and now? Well now I see friends and family sharing regular photo dumps of their best Christmas moments all over social media. Matching outfits, perfect smiles - some even sharing their picture perfect meals ready for corporate consumption. And of course there is always the update - a quick rundown of how each family member is doing and progressing. Funny I can’t recall a Xerox letter or a Social Media post that shared about failure, depression, discouragement, despair, or loneliness and if they are mentioned they would be quickly covered with a positive angle. Christmas letters and posts are intended to leave you with one conclusion - things are good and life is progressing. Its the cultural gospel: progress and success. So how was Christmas - good! How has this year been good...but the problem with the progress and success narrative is that it does not describe life as it actually exists -does it? Then in those honest moments of looking at our friends/families’ progress it feels condemning of our own reality. The problem with the gospel of progress is that its never OK to be where you are...its as if its up to us to defeat the enemy of suffering and death by our own strength.

The Apostle John proclaims in the opening verses of his gospel *“And the Word became flesh and lived among us”*. Beloved, the gospel declares that Jesus arrived where we are! It is not a message about an event or our achievement. Jesus has come to where we actually are...not where we would like to be and that is really good news! Is there such a thing as progress and success in the Christian life? Yes. But our challenge is that the cultural narrative leaves little to no room for the bulls eye Jesus Himself painted as success: the poor, the meek, those who hunger and thirst...these are the ones who culturally are dismissed.

The basis of the Gospel we proclaim and believe is about a God who became man. Not an event and certainly not about human achievement. He emptied Himself in self giving, self emptying love and forgiveness. The uncreated God reveals the beauty of the uncreated in humanity by embracing humanity. God chose humanity to reveal divinity in a life lived!

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And the secret is simply this: **Christ in you!**

Yes, Christ in you bringing with him the hope of all glorious things to come. Col 1:27b, JB Phillips

From page 1

I believe this is why 3rd Century theologian Origen said something like this ‘ *as we by our life reflect the love of Christ we are more helpful to Kings and rulers than all who fight or serve them* ’.

Beloved, God sees humanity as the vehicle and opportunity to reveal divinity in a life lived in love, not by events or achievements. Christmas, says St. Gregory of Nyssa, is the “*festival of re-creation.*” *It is God giving God’s own life to his people.* This is why the early Church started The 12 days of Christmas (following Christmas day) as a festival of the re-creation of God’s celebration of humanity. It is celebrating more than an just an event on the calendar but the reality of God entrusting God’s self to human beings, to you and to me. It is God’s reaffirmation of humanity’s original intent- the sharing and exchanging of life between God and you and me. That’s why the early church could say that ‘*God became human so that humanity might bear the image of God. The Son of God became the son of man so that the sons of men might become sons of God. Divinity was clothed in humanity so that humanity might be clothed in divinity.*’

So here is the conclusion beloved: **you are not here to prove your worth** - we have been given worth revealed by the Love of Christ. This happens not by the will of the flesh, or the will of people, but by God. Third Century Rabbi Joshua ben Levi said: ‘*A procession of angels passes before each person, and the heralds go before them, saying, “Make way for the image of God!”*’ Imagine how different our lives and world would be if we lived with this as our reality and if it is was that truth that guided our lives.

Everywhere we go the angels go with us announcing the coming of the image of God and reminding us of who we are. That is the truth of Christmas for us - it is not over . It is also the truth for the person living next door, for those we love, for those we fear, for those who are like us and those who are different, for the stranger, and for our enemies. “*And the Word became flesh and lived among us.*” The Word became flesh and **has never ceased living among us...**So make way. Wherever you go. Whatever you are doing. Whoever you are with. Make way for the image of God. So, how are you Christmasing? Christmas is actually a verb, beloved. **Christmas your way through life!**



Join Us As we Pray for our City

- Thursday 6—7 am—phone call meeting. Contact Ben @ 260-403-4948 to join.
- Friday—7pm at 1414 Archer Avenue and
- On Zoom—833 669 278

With gratitude and integrity we steward your gifts. Thank you for partnering with the mission the Lord has given us in this hour as we partner with Him in His kingdom purposes.

Please make your **tax deductible** contribution to:

**IHOP Fort Wayne
5907 West Wallen Road,
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Ben and Denise, Please agree with us over these prayer needs for the next month...

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