

“We Need a Little Christmas”

Luke 2: 8-14

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I like the song, “We Need a Little Christmas,” because of its catchy tune and message. It is not uncommon to hear me humming this song while doing other things this month. I’ll spare you that experience this morning, though.

This song has been on my mind lately. If there ever was a time we needed Christmas it is this year. Actually, we don’t need a little Christmas, but a big one. We need as much Christmas as the next few weeks will provide.

Why? The last three months have been difficult to say the least. Since September 11, planes have been crashing, bombs have been falling, buildings have been collapsing, people have been dying and the economy has been ailing. These have not been normal days. Fear and anxiety abound.

To be candid with you, though, fear, anxiety and Christmas have gone together before this year. Listen to the words describing the first Christmas recorded in Luke 2:8-11.

“And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were **terrified**. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be **afraid**. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.’ ”

Those shepherds were afraid, weren’t they? Not for the same reasons we are, but they were afraid nonetheless. And what were the first words of the angel? **“Do not be afraid**. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people.”

This is why we need Christmas. We need some good news in the midst of our terror and the message of Christmas provides it. What is the Christmas message? It is the message of hope.

What is hope? According to John Claypool, “It is the energy and fuel that animate life. Hope is to the spirit what breath is to the body.” That’s important, real important.

Put another way, hope is the antidote to despair. To a Jew, despair is the only unforgivable sin. Despair indicates hopelessness and hopelessness is to deny God. Who is to say what God can and cannot do? As Claypool says, “We don’t know enough to be that negative. We don’t know what will happen in the great not yet.”

You see, our hope is not based upon what man can do, but what God can do. And we are talking about a God who can turn chaos into order, evil into good, fear into courage, sorrow into joy, mistakes into lessons and death into life.

We are talking about a God who is for us, a God who loves us with a love greater than any parent has for a child. We are talking about a God who has made the decision not to give up on the world but redeem it, not trash it but restore it.

We are talking about a God who sent His son to be the visible image of the invisible God so we could know Him and not be afraid of Him. We are talking about a God who sent His own son to show us how to live and then die for us so we could.

We are talking about a God who raised His son from the dead so that we might know that no enemy is greater than He is, or as Claypool says, "That we may know that His goodness is greater than all our badness."

In other words, there is no situation in life that Christian hope cannot embrace and change, not even death. Again, this is true not because of who man is but who God is. Furthermore, this is true not because of His great power, but His wondrous love, a love that will not abandon us at our worst or in our darkest hour.

Do you see why hope is so important to our well being? Do you see why hope is needed in this dark hour in our nation's history? Do you see why we need Christmas?

The Christmas message for 2001 is this. Neither Osama bin Laden or Wall Street will have the final word in our lives. God will and that word will be a good one. It is a word of hope for a better day. As the Psalmist said, "Weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning" Psalm 30:5b.

Yes, "We Need a Little Christmas." It could not come at a better time. Thank you, Lord, thank you.