

# First Sunday After Christmas, 2017

## Christmas is Over?

Isaiah 9:2-7 / Hebrews 2

St. Andrew's – Jacksonville, OR

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Well, Christmas is over! The trees are on the curb and garbage cans line the streets, their lids propped open with packaging and bows as if singing the great Alleluia Chorus. Minds are now focused on rest and the mystifying tinfoil wraps that reside in our refrigerators, evidence of a successful Christmas meal. The chaos is over and all that is left is the credit card bill that is still a month out.

But, have no fear!

It is a brand new year.

It's New Years Eve, put on your party shoes.

Tip your mug, it's a night for booze.

Raise your voice and raise your glass.

Show the world you still have class.

And then tomorrow comes and tomorrow goes.

And no one really knows what it's all about

And life goes on as it always does

All wonder lost just because.

Have you ever sat back after Christmas Day and wondered what the big exhale is for? Why the need for the 'big drop' into the couch? Why are three days rest required to recuperate before we start it all up again to bring in the New Year? Did Christmas simply come and go? I hope Christmas and the penitential season of Advent leading up to it have had a greater impact on your lives than that. Christmas is not a single event that can be separated from the greater context of greatest story ever told. The ability of a climactic event to draw us in only illustrates the power behind the overall story...it is the whole journey, before and after, that even allows for the climax to shine. Christmas is a climactic event not in and of itself, but because it is the fulfillment of an ancient promise that began in the Garden.

It was in the Garden where we first blocked the light and created the barrier between ourselves and God. What could be done to rectify this misdeed? If we failed to hold onto the light then, what can we do to regain the light by our own power now? The answer is found within the journey. The journey of mankind to that first Christmas day is God's reply and it is the prophet Isaiah who says it so beautifully, *"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined."* A promise was made and the promise has not been forgotten! Christmas is not about us and Christmas is all about us! The journey we are privy too is God's journey into the very lives of mankind as he enters the human race maintaining His divinity while accepting our humanity. Our reading from Hebrews today stops short of this profound statement,

*"Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage. For surely it is not with angels that he is concerned but with the descendants of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted"* (Hebrews 2:14-18). From the highest of mountains to the lowest of valleys...can there be a greater journey?

Up until the Holy Spirit moved upon Mary we remained lost in our sins. At the moment of Jesus's conception the heart of mankind began to stir and we too joined the great journey leading us into the body of Christ. Have you ever given thought to your own personal journey? From your first memories to this very day what events along the way are responsible for your faith in Christ...or even for your denial. Each of us has a story to tell and it is in these stories where we see the work of the Holy Spirit using the events of our lives to interact with those around us as we become part of their tale all culminating in the Greatest Story Ever Told.

Advent has reminded us where we have come from as a human race and in the Christmas season we have seen the promise of redemption

fulfilled. This is a great moment and not one to be glossed over. Christmas should be celebrated with great joy and jubilation! But, this is not the end of our pledge and should not be the stepping off point for Christian commitment. Listen once again to the writer of Hebrews: *“How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him...”* (the Apostles). We have been given a great gift...a gift in which to find rest, a gift that gives real hope...a gift that is to be shared. This little babe came into the world to bear our sins...another necessary leg of the journey to reunite us to our heavenly Father. *“...we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.”*

Our lives are all about the journey. All of our stories have everything to do with our neighbor; friend and foe. What we do matters. How we respond incites consequences. Our words and actions entice others and spawn new behaviors. Wherever we are at in our journeys we are to continue to grow in response to the leading of the Holy Spirit; that our influence in the world is in line with the Father’s will. We have a great responsibility to use the God-given gifts that have been imparted to us to the glory of God.

*“For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.”*

The path to follow Jesus is ever before you. It doesn’t end at Christmas or even on the Cross. The evidence found in the Gospels and in the writings of the Early Church Fathers all illustrate a continuing expansion of the body of Christ through the centuries. We are to continue in our fellowship, study to show ourselves approved unto God and plant the seeds that will fill the void left by sin. Do you think you can find the joy of Christmas day in every Lord’s Day? If you truly understand the significance of your redemption...I think so.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.