

# Christmas 2, 2020

## Where the Shadow Falls

Isaiah 61:1-3

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Another new year has sprung upon us; a time for new promises – to be broken at a later date, new years resolutions – problematic at best and easily forgotten, visions of yoga and wheat grass for perfect health – replaced by chips and television and (with any luck) stronger money management skills to make our golden years less yellow.

Every year Advent and Christmas seem to fade quickly into the party life atmosphere of our worldly affair of bringing in a new year. But the mere fact that Ryan Seacrest has replaced Dick Clark in the New Year's Rockin' Eve celebration, seen all over the world, should remind us of something far more important than a date change from Tuesday to Wednesday. This celebration of one year progressing into the next is a reflection of what the world has to offer...a time in which we stop to look back on how fleeting this life really is... a reminder that if we set our hearts upon worldly aspirations a time will come when such aspirations will cease and come to an end or, inevitably, we will depart and all will be finished this side of heaven.

If we are honest with ourselves we must admit that all we accomplish in this vapor of time given us is wasted time if not done for and in the glory of God. Today and any day is a chance to make a new resolution...one that reflects a life lived within the will of God. It matters little what we have and what we have not, if we suffer or if we enjoy, as long as in the end we are found worthy to be blessed with an entrance into the eternal Kingdom of God!

You see, it was not only the celebration of a new year that we just witnessed, but January 1 is also the day we commemorate the circumcision of that little baby born in a manger whose name was Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God...Jesus! The mortification of the flesh is a call to be dead to this world even while we yet live in it, for we are in the world but not of the world. We are not to seek to do our own

wills and relish in worldly pleasures if we are to learn to love God and seek eternal life.

New years tells us that neither riches nor fame, nor knowledge nor political party will make us one year younger or delay our departure from this world. According to the Gospels, we are not to have such desires for worldly gain or acceptance, but to renounce them in favor of that which is far greater...to be within the heart of God and to walk humbly with him.

Every day is a new day where opportunities are endless to choose Christ. I am reminded daily by the shadows that cross my path, sometimes left by a glorious tree or at other times a magnificent peak leaving its outline on the valley below and sometimes it is even my own shadow:

*"The shadow by my finger cast, the poet writes, divides the future from the past; behind it's unreturning line...the vanishing hour...no longer thine. Before it lies the unknown hour...in darkness...and beyond thy power. One hour alone is in thine hands...the now on which the shadow stands."* We do not have to wait for the beginning of a new year to make great changes in our lives; we do not have to live according to the flesh until the right day comes along telling us to make a new start. The power of God is upon us every day! The Holy Spirit is waiting for us to ask that he may respond! Jesus knocks that we will open the door.

Our reading from today's Epistle from the prophet Isaiah reflects the Gospel, the good news, that was made manifest in the obscure village of Bethlehem within the shadows of a manger: *"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."*

With Jesus Christ as your savior and heirs to the eternal kingdom of God Almighty I challenge you in this new year to see yourselves as living members within the very body of Christ where *"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon you; because the Lord hath anointed you to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent you to bind up the brokenhearted, to*

*proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."*

And we are called by the Collect for today to just that! *"Almighty God, who has poured upon us the new light of thine incarnate Word; Grant that the same light enkindled in our hearts may shine forth in our lives through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."*

Humans exist to worship God and it is our Christian responsibility to send out the light of truth that others may come and see. It is in our works that the light of Christ shines forth for the entire world to see; it is our faith by which the hearts of humanity are illuminated to accept the work of the Holy Spirit.

Is this the day that the Spirit of God has come upon you to speak words of truth to the meek? Is this the day the Almighty sends you to hold the brokenhearted in your arms in an embrace of comfort? Is this the day God asks you to proclaim freedom to those bound by their sins that they too may find peace and be still? The world needs you good Christian people to show others the Way.

We do not have to wait for a secular new year to set paths straight. Correction is ever before us; an ongoing sanctification of our souls. New Years celebrations come and go, but at some point we stop and our new year celebrations cease. But eternity is ever before us! It is what we have been preparing for all our lives. But I am grateful for our New Years celebrations in this one respect; it is a time when the whole world stops on the same day and reflects on what was and what may come to be. Neither perspective is possible without first considering where the shadow falls, for it is in the here and now that we must decide and make the choices that will dictate our eternal lives.

*"He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty, I will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." (Psalm 91:1).* A new year is possible every day, may we be examples of that truth every day of the year.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.