

Christmas 2C 2010
John 1:1-18
Sermon for Advent LC
January 3rd, 2010

“Christ has come to Stay”

Dear sisters and brothers, grace to you and peace from God the Father and our promised Messiah, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Merry Christmas! No you didn't hear me wrong, I said merry Christmas—for we are still in the midst of the Christmas season in the church year. Today is technically the second Sunday of Christmas— even though most of us have already moved on from that celebration. Your responses, or rather lack of to my greeting of Merry Christmas demonstrates quite well the reality that we in our society and most of us individually quickly move through Christmas and put it to the back of our mind as we head into the New Year. This is natural, this is the norm, and this is what we do. Our house is hanging on barely to the promise of Christmas— a few nativity sets left, the lights still on the house— largely cause they are frozen ☺, but the tree has been removed, the decorations put away, and when we get around to it the rest will follow and be put in storage for another year. As quickly as Christmas came, it has now left our minds— but I want to remind you that there are now 356 days of shopping left until next Christmas. You see, our nature is to move from one thing to the next, even as a church we do this— yes we wallow a bit in the Christmas time— this time of Christ's birth but very soon we begin our journey towards Easter with Lent just around the corner really. I wonder then is our nature as well to forget quickly, to put to the back of our mind quickly the Christ Child that broke into the normalcy of our world on Christmas. Do we quickly let go of the beauty that Christmas really is— God becoming man, God entering our messiness— do we push that aside like we push aside the celebration of the season? I don't know for sure...but I bet most of us do. But...the Christ child did not come to be forgotten; in fact Christ has come to stay!

The promise that Christ came to stay I think is a promise that we need to cling to as we just closed out 2009 and now begin with 2010. Because if we learned anything over the last year in our world we learned that our world and our worlds individually are not stable and in fact are quite fragile, we learned that our lives can quickly change due to losing our jobs and even our families, we learned that we are not invincible to pain and illness, we learned that war and oppression continues to rule our world not grace and mercy— that innocent people continue to be taken advantage of and even killed, finally we learned in 2009 that humanity is broken, that we seem to be in the dark, that even though there are glimpses of hope and a better future, we are stuck in a rut as a people. So if we need anything to begin this new year we need the hope of a Christ that doesn't just come for a day or two but stays with us forever. And I got news for you all folks, Christ has come to stay...Christ came to stay in our brokenness to stay in our sadness, to walk with us as we lose jobs and families, to hold us as we work through illness and darkness. Yes, Christ is not going anywhere even when we push him aside and package him up for another time— Christ is here to stay. Christ is here for you, now, not just once a while but forever. Christ has come to stay!

How do I know this, how do I believe this, why does it matter? I know it because I have experienced it, I know it because I've heard it from you as you have journeyed through those pains and sorrows, I heard it a bit last Sunday in worship in the stories you shared- Christ has been with us and will continue to be with us. I believe it because I know it to be true and it's too good to not hold on to. And it matters because it's the very core of our Gospel promise- it's the very beginning of John's Gospel period and it happens to be the center to the Gospel for today. We see in the Gospel of John for today- John's Christmas story if you will- John's account of how it all came to be and we see clearly that Christ has been promised and part of God's plan since the very beginning- in the beginning we hear was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God- that Word dear friends John is referencing is Christ- our savior, our Messiah, the one who came as an innocent baby and who came to stay. And with the coming of Christ into our world we know and we proclaim that God is with us- not that God was with us, not that God will be with us, but that God is with us. And it gets better in verses four and five it gets great, the word of God through John this morning- is simple and pure hope- "in him was life, and the life was the light of the people. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it." Dear friends that is the hope- that is the joy- that is the promise- that is the place we need to be- with Christ, in the light. Now...darkness will still happen, sure life will still occur- but our Lord has redeemed us, our Lord has come to us, our God is with us, and Christ has come to stay.

Last week as we worshipped and we shared how God has been at work in our lives I was truly touched by the stories and the witness to what God has been doing. And I thought a lot all week about the things that were said, and I found great joy in knowing that God is working in your lives and that Advent is a place where God is alive. And then I came back to what Sue Olson said- just to recap- she said that her family had decided that 2010 is going to be a rocking year for the Olsons and I agree with her- it will be but also I know in my heart of hearts that 2010 is going to be a defining and even a rockin year for Advent. Dear friends God is Good- God has come to you in the form of Jesus, has promised to be with you forever and now calls you and me and all of us in this place and the whole body of Christ to make his light known the darkness, and we get to be the ones who help make sure that Christ is known in the darkness, that Christ is felt in the painful situations, that Christ is lifted up through the brokenness of our lives. Dear friends, Christ has come to stay- don't forget that- and let your light shine so others can see that Christ has come to stay for them too. God loves you and so do I. Amen.