

Christmas

(Cycle ABC)

READING I: Isaiah 9:1-6
READING II: Titus 2:11-14
GOSPEL: Luke 2:1-14*

DATE: 12/24-25/2009
PLACE: Corpus Christi
TIME: 10:00 p.m.; 10:30 a.m.
EVENT: mass

THEME: God comes to us where we are; and where we are, God is as well.

I. A Different Starting Place

- There's the story of the traveler who stopped and asked a farmer for directions to his destination.
- The farmer thought for a moment and then said, "Well, if I were you, I wouldn't start from here."
- There are often times in life when, I'm sure, we wish we could begin from a different starting place.
- My guess is that President Obama would have much rather started from a different place in Afghanistan from what he inherited from President Bush.
- He may have especially felt that way when he accepted the Nobel Peace Prize only a few weeks after having announced an escalation of troops in that war.
- Oh, that we could address the problems in our lives from the starting points of our choice.

II. The Story of Christmas

- Throughout the Season of Advent, we have been hearing from the great prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures.
- Each one of those prophets, in his own way, delivered two fundamental messages to the people: their unfaithfulness to God's covenant would lead to their destruction, but God would ultimately show mercy on them and save them from their sins.
- A message of warning and a message of hope.
- As Christians, we understand the story of Christmas as that message of hope fulfilled.
- At the birth of Jesus, an angel of the Lord appears to the shepherds in the field and announces to them "good news of great joy that will be for all the people."
- "For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Christ and Lord."

- “And this will be a sign for you:” the angel continues, “you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.”
- How is an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger a sign for us?
- And what does it tell us about how God chooses to save us from our sins?

III. God Starts Where We Are

- Of course, Christmas is not the first time that God has tried to remedy human sinfulness.
 - Only five chapters into the Book of Genesis we are told that God is so disgusted with the sinfulness of human beings that God decides to wipe out the entire world with a great flood and to start all over with a small group from Noah’s family.
 - Only thirteen chapters later, God is at it again, destroying the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah because of their sinfulness.
 - It seems that, in the early years of God’s working with humans, God had a tendency to wipe everything out and to begin at a different starting place whenever there was a serious problem.
- But the story of Christmas is different: the story of Christmas tells us that, ultimately, God decided no longer to begin at a different starting point in solving the problems of human sinfulness.
 - The story of Christmas tells us that, from now on, God starts where God is.
 - Indeed, God starts where we are.
- At Christmas, God comes to us wherever we may be.
 - God will not abandon us and choose to start all over again.
 - God remains faithful to us, will work with us, and, in fact, will find the solution to our problems from among us.
- God starts where we are – and so must we.

IV. Starting from Where We Are

- So often in life, especially when we run up against a brick wall, we wish we could start all over again.
 - We wish that things hadn’t progressed the way they did, that we hadn’t made the choices we made, that we hadn’t ended up where we are.

- In fact, we wish we could undo the past and start all over, because we just can't imagine how anything can get better from where we are.
- And that's when the story of Christmas speaks to us.
 - Christmas reminds us that, no matter how bad things are, God remains faithful to us.
 - No matter how impossible our situations may appear, God will find a way – not by starting all over, but by working with us, by starting where we are.
- And God starting where we are means God becoming one of us.
 - The birth of Jesus Christ is not a sign that God is frustrated with us and wants to start all over.
 - The birth of Jesus Christ is a sign of God's love for us, of God's care for us, and of God's confidence that the solution to our problems can come from among us.
- An infant wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger is a sign that God has joined us intimately and irrevocably in our time of need.
 - It is a sign, not that all of the world's problems will disappear at Jesus' birth, but that the world's problems are no longer insurmountable in our attempts to address them alone.
 - An infant wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger is a sign of God's life among us – and where there's life, there is hope.

V. Conclusion

- So, the next time you wish that you could begin from a different starting place – think again.
 - There really is no going back; there really is no undoing the past.
 - Not even God can change the past.
- There only is starting from where we are.
 - And that's O.K.
 - Because where we are, God is as well.
 - So, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Christ and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.”