

Family Fresh Expressions
Advent 4
Sunday 20th December 2020

We continue to reflect on Christmas and what it means to you allowing some of this into your daily life. Mother Teresa once wrote "It is Christmas every time you let God love others through you...yes, it is Christmas every time you smile at your brother and offer him your hand." So please bare this in mind as we continue of our journey towards Christmas.

Let us pray

God of hope, You brought love into this world. Be the love that dwells between us. God of hope, You brought peace into this world. Be the peace that dwells between us. God of hope, You brought joy into this world. Be the joy that dwells between us. God of hope, be the rock we stand upon, be the centre, the focus of our lives always, and particularly this Advent time. Draw us together in unity, that our praise and worship might echo in our walls and also through our lives. In this Advent of expectation draw us together in mission, that the hope within might be the song we sing, and the melody of our lives. In this Advent of expectation draw us together in service, that the path we follow might lead us from a stable to a glimpse of eternity. Amen

In your own space, light a candle if you have one or switch on the Christmas tree lights, lets spend a moment focusing on the candle and its light shadows. Be at peace with yourself and your environment. Feel God 's presence with you.



Remember that Christ is the light of the world. His light will be with you on your journey if you ask Him to walk with you and guide you.

Read the words of John 8:12 - "Jesus once again addressed them: "I am the world's Light. No one who follows me stumbles around in the darkness. I provide plenty of light to live in."

Jesus came into the world for us because God loved us so much. We can know for certain that God's love will always be there for us, it never ends.

Jesus, the Light of the World. The light of the world dazzles us - as an infant in a manger, an itinerant preacher, a healer, a wonder-worker, a dying man, a Risen Lord, an ascended King, in heavenly bread, or returning to us in triumph - he dazzles us with his light. But we look at ourselves, and we may not be so dazzled. We look at each other, and we may not see the light.

Thomas Merton wrote about what he called a mystical experience. He said that one day he was standing on a street corner, he writes that : "*I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all those people, that they were mine, and I was theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers. It was like waking from a dream of separateness.... Now I realize what we all are. If only everybody could realize this! But it cannot be explained. There is no way of telling people that they are all walking around shining like the sun*" (*Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*).

It is no different here among us. In the darkness, through the light of a single candle we are shining too! We all give off a different light. Some of us kind of glow. Some of us are a little more laser-like. Some of us twinkle, and some of us strobe. It doesn't matter. We all shine.

And we don't have to worry so much about failing to shine, failing to act, failing to bear fruit - not as long as we always have God by the hand, not as long as we love Jesus and we let Him

love us. Let His compassion toward you grow warm and tender as He promises in the Hosea 11:8. Let Him set us free as He promises His Truth will do in John 8:32. If we let God do these things, then we will shine because our light, comes from Christ. It's unique, it's our own, but it's the light of Christ shining in us and through you.

Light has a purpose. It doesn't just shine. It shines on something. It doesn't just warm. It warms something. Where does your light shine? Are you letting the light of Christ into the cracks in your life, so his light can shine through you?



As you sit still again enjoying the light. Ask God to fill your heart with hope, joy, peace and love. Allow the spirit of God to enrich your life.

For each step that you take, ask God to be your Guide. For each step that you take ask God to be your strength. For each mountain you climb, ask God to be with you every step of the way. For each river which sweeps you off your feet, ask God to be your safety net. For each place where you need rest, ask God to be your peace. For each sunrise and sunset you experience, may you know the joy of living with God in our hearts.

As we go about our final preparations for Christmas 2020, bear this story in mind. A small boy shyly presented himself to a shop assistant in a Glasgow Marks and Spencer store. "I would like to buy my mother a new blouse for Christmas," he said bravely. "Very nice," the clerk replied, "but first I shall have to know more about your mother. Tell me, is she short or tall?" "She is, she is ... the small boy stuttered and stammered. But then it came out forcefully and clear: She is perfect, she is perfect! So the clerk wrapped a blouse size 12 for him. "Merry Christmas!" said the boy, as he tenderly handed over his Christmas present to his perfect mother. A few days later, the mother returned the perfect size 12 blouse, and exchanged it for a size 22. We may not fit the perfect size. But we all bear the hallmark of God. We are all perfect for (at least) somebody. We too are sent to one another through God's Word, God's hallmark.

Remember the events of that first Christmas. It began with two ordinary people, in love with each other and with God. They were going about their business of living when God interrupted them and changed their lives for ever. That first Christmas was a hard one for such a young couple. Having a baby is life changing in itself but to also be so far from home as sojourners in a strange place. With the uncertainty of the future or what that future might look like.

Today, much of this is true for us. We are all going about our busy preparations for Christmas and God is with us. But there is a cloud of uncertainty hanging over our lives. This Christmas will be different and we are facing an uncertain future. However, we can allow God to enter our life's and allow Him to dwell with you during this extra-ordinary Christmas. It might be a hard Christmas for you without your loved ones around you. But God is with you and you might ask Him to remind you of perfect Christmases of the past and to project this forward to joyful times in the future. God will show us the way.

Have a silent, loving Christmas. May God be with you and your families.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace. As you trust in Him, may your life overflow with hope and joy and love and peace. **Amen**