

Christmas Eve
December 24, 2015
Rev. Diane Monti-Catania

Sermon – “Why We Are Here”

Blessings on this Christmas Eve.

How good it is to gather together on this holy night to nurture the light of Christ in our hearts.

We need light right now.

We need hope.

We need peace.

We need joy.

We need love.

This is the place to have those needs met.

This is the place where we turn to the faith of our ancestors and call upon the one who brings peace.

Tonight we will hear the familiar Christmas stories of the babe in the manger and the shepherds and the angels.

We will sing carols that we know deep in our hearts – memories made long ago and stored for evenings such as this.

Tonight will be a recollection and a remembrance of Christmas Eves past, but let us also look forward.

The gospels of Matthew and Luke begin with the Christmas story to remind us of Jesus’ humanity.

A baby, born in the most humble of circumstances.

A baby – just like we were babies once.

A son of God who reminds us that we too are sons and daughters of God.

John’s gospel focuses on the divinity of Christ.

His story has a very different beginning.

From John we hear:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

He was in the beginning with God.

All things came into being through him and without him not one thing came into being.

What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

The light, the eternal light that is Jesus Christ, burns bright in our hearts and souls.

We are made from this light.

My friends,

This is a dark time in our world.

Hatred and violence seem commonplace.

Adversity has become the norm of our personal interactions.

This is not the way God intended.

So come to this gathering tonight to light the spark of peace that resides in you.

Come to gather in the light of Christ's hope, peace, joy & love.

And then take it out into the world-let it shine.

Christ didn't just gather in - he sent disciples out.

So come tonight to be nourished and fortified for life in this hectic world.

Take all that you need.

And then go.

Spend what you receive tonight.

Spend the hope on envisioning a future for our earth.

Spend the peace on getting to know your neighbor.

Spend the joy on making a difference in someone's life.

Spend the love on working together, all of us, to build Gods kingdom on earth.

Welcome Emmanuel into your heart.

Let Gods Holy Spirit abide in you.

“Amazing Peace: A Christmas Poem

By Dr. Maya Angelou 2005

Thunder rumbles in the mountain passes
And lightning rattles the eaves of our houses.
Flood waters await us in our avenues.

Snow falls upon snow, falls upon snow to avalanche
Over unprotected villages.
The sky slips low and grey and threatening.

We question ourselves.
What have we done to so affront nature?
We worry God.
Are you there? Are you there really?
Does the covenant you made with us still hold?

Into this climate of fear and apprehension, Christmas enters,
Streaming lights of joy, ringing bells of hope
And singing carols of forgiveness high up in the bright air.
The world is encouraged to come away from rancor,
Come the way of friendship.

It is the Glad Season.
Thunder ebbs to silence and lightning sleeps quietly in the corner.
Flood waters recede into memory.
Snow becomes a yielding cushion to aid us
As we make our way to higher ground.

Hope is born again in the faces of children
It rides on the shoulders of our aged as they walk into their sunsets.
Hope spreads around the earth.
Brightening all things,
Even hate which crouches breeding in dark corridors.

In our joy, we think we hear a whisper.
At first it is too soft. Then only half heard.
We listen carefully as it gathers strength.
We hear a sweetness.
The word is Peace.
It is loud now. It is louder.
Louder than the explosion of bombs.

We tremble at the sound. We are thrilled by its presence.
It is what we have hungered for.
Not just the absence of war. But, true Peace.
A harmony of spirit, a comfort of courtesies.
Security for our beloveds and their beloveds.

We clap hands and welcome the Peace of Christmas.
We beckon this good season to wait a while with us.
We, Baptist and Buddhist, Methodist and Muslim, say come.
Peace.
Come and fill us and our world with your majesty.

We, the Jew and the Jainist, the Catholic and the Confucian,
Implore you, to stay a while with us.
So we may learn by your shimmering light
How to look beyond complexion and see community.

It is Christmas time, a halting of hate time.
On this platform of peace, we can create a language
To translate ourselves to ourselves and to each other.

At this Holy Instant, we celebrate the Birth of Jesus Christ
Into the great religions of the world.
We jubilate the precious advent of trust.
We shout with glorious tongues at the coming of hope.
All the earth's tribes loosen their voices
To celebrate the promise of Peace.

We, Angels and Mortal's, Believers and Non-Believers,
Look heavenward and speak the word aloud.
Peace. We look at our world and speak the word aloud.
Peace. We look at each other, then into ourselves
And we say without shyness or apology or hesitation.
Peace, My Brother.
Peace, My Sister.
Peace, My Soul.”