

The Rev. Dr. David K. McIntosh  
Dec. 24, 2020- Christmas Eve  
Given at St. Mark's Church, Bridgewater

Isaiah 9:2-4,6-7; Psalm 96; Titus 3:4-7; Luke 2: 1-20

**“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light...” (Isa 9) †**

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During Christmas, we share and recall stories of the manger scene, and an infant wrapped in strips of cloth... of multitudes of angels from above... and of poor, lowly shepherds. God came to us, became one of us... in the strangest of ways, in the strangest of places ... and still does. This year of COVID has left many of us feeling alone, abandoned and confused. And Christmas is a wonderful example of how the holy and divine intermingle with the common and ordinary... of a time when the holy so definitively touched the lives of ordinary human beings. The story we just heard in Luke's Gospel is a brilliant depiction of the moment of the incarnation, when the Holy One became part of ordinary human life. And in Luke's message one thing is very clear, from Mary's voice in the Magnificat to the birth of her son: The coming of Jesus is intended to turn things upside down! What was ordinary, common, has been transformed. Our great and mighty God has humbled God's self (*kenosis*) and become one of us. So, we'll never be alone!

Notice in this story, God's presence is not made manifest to those who are rich and powerful, but to those who are poor and on the fringes of society... shepherds. Shepherds were avoided in Jewish society (they did not keep to ritual washings or follow religious rules), they were outcasts. And the message to the shepherds—what they heard, and later told others, was: the One who is most holy & extraordinary has become ordinary, and in doing so, made those who were considered lowly and ordinary, holy. “And all who heard it were amazed.”

The birth of Jesus, the mysterious and incomprehensible in-breaking of what is holy into that, which is ordinary... happens again tonight, right now. Jesus is here in Word, and Sacrament, and People! The Greek term, *anamnesis*, translates 'remembering,' but in the life of our Church, *anamnesis* is more; it's more of a

“Re- Membering.” A renewal... to make again.” This happens every time we ‘remember’ Jesus together. And, especially at this time of the year, as we hear God whisper into our collective ear, “I love you!” That’s the great message of the incarnation: “I love you!” With that simple phrase, Isaiah’s prophecy was fulfilled: “Those who lived in darkness—on them light has shined.”

Despite our imperfections, and our failings... despite the fact that we may suffer pain or illness... despite that fact that the COVID 19 pandemic has changed our lives, has limited how we are able to gather as Church... despite the fact that many families will need to figure out how to ‘gather’ in other ways this year... we remember, we love each other... that we are loved. Yes, tonight God says, “I love you enough to become one of you.... I love you!”

Let us re-member... Let us embrace and share God’s eternal love... this Christmastide and forevermore!

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

