

Christmas Eve Meditation
Tuesday, December 24, 2013
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The title of the meditation:
"For Unto Us a Child is Born"

Let us pray: Holy and Loving God, we gather this evening in the name of the one whose birth we celebrate. As we contemplate the meaning of this birth, may the words of my mouth and the meditations and thoughts of each of our hearts be acceptable in your sight. Amen

Tonight, each of us has journeyed to this place to be with friends and family. In the paths of our individual lives, we have followed the star to Westminster...and we come.

Some of us are expectant and hopeful. Others of us, are longing for comfort. For many of us, this is a familiar journey as we have gathered together on Christmas Eve with this family of faith for more years that we can remember. Others of us have been away, the paths of our lives have taken us to different places on new adventures. For us, this is a homecoming and there is a sense of nostalgia as we return to a familiar place with memories to ponder. Still others of us may be sharing our first Christmas Eve here at Westminster...finding ourselves in a new community with all the anticipations of where our life's journey will take us in the New Year.

Whatever the circumstance; we are together on this Holy night because we believe in Christmas--and if we don't, we want to... We want to believe that the One who created us, who formed our inward parts and knit us together in our mother's womb, would join us in our humanity and become one of us as Mary's child.

We want to believe that God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, whose understanding is unsearchable and who renews the strength of those who wait would come to us in the vulnerability of a child, teach us what it means to be truly human and then conquer death by dying on a cross.

And perhaps more than anything else, in a changing and unpredictable world, that is not always kind or fair, we want to believe in the constancy and dependability of a loving and faithful God. And so we gather, with a sense of awe and wonder, to hear the familiar, ancient words in the story of our Savior's birth, read by our high school seniors in this meaningful Westminster tradition.

Let us be careful not to over romanticize the birth of Christ. When we do this, our temptation is to deny his humanity and God's willingness to join us in ours. And then, when our own lives become difficult and unromantic, we forget we have a God who understands our circumstances. We forget we have a God who entered into the cold and lonely places in our world to be there with us. We forget we have a God who comforts and upholds us when we feel most alone and abandoned.

Christmas can often be an especially painful and stressful time for many of us because of the myths and unrealistic expectations that have evolved from the sentimentality around this season.

There was likely great uneasiness the day Christ was born. Surely some hasty words were exchanged on the journey to the manger. A pretty scene...hardly... giving birth in a barn is neither pretty nor comfortable. Rather it's gutsy, difficult and down to earth. It is a call for endurance, strength, courage and character on the sojourn of one's life.

Imagine the shepherds who watched, waiting for the sign in a field radiant with heaven's light! The shepherds are told that the sign is a baby. What? Could it be? The sign is as common as the shepherds themselves. Suddenly a new light is shed on all they ever conceived before. Earth is not looking to heaven for a sign but heaven is looking to earth, proclaiming, "See, God is among you." The gift is found in the midst of your lives, ordinary and stressful as they may be, sometimes neither pretty nor comfortable. The gift of this child born unto us, Emanuel is that *God is with us*.

And so on Christmas Eve, as we remember and celebrate the birth of a child, as we worship together and with Mary, ponder these things in our hearts, may we be enlightened by the mystery of the Christmas message...the celebration of God coming down to Earth and becoming a part of our world. God doesn't lift us out of our humanity, but joins us in it, and in so doing says, "we are loved for whom we are."

Often it is only the very wise and children who recognize God in our midst. May we see with their eyes on this Silent, Holy Night. May we recognize God's presence along the way of the journeys we have traveled this past year and look for God in our midst on the journeys into the New Year. Amen.