

[M-0279 107 005.029]

"SHARING CHRIST"

Dec. 10, '89

Luke 2:8-20

"AND THE SHEPHERDS RETURNED, GLORIFYING AND PRAISING GOD FOR ALL THEY HAD HEARD AND SEEN AS IT HAD BEEN TOLD THEM" (Luke 2:20)

WHEN WE HEAR THE NATIVITY STORY ONCE AGAIN AND FEEL ITS JOY PULSE THROUGH OUR VEINS, WE CAN HARDLY CONTAIN OURSELVES. AS THESE ANCIENT SHEPHERDS EXPERIENCED, THE GOOD NEWS OF CHRIST'S BIRTH INTO OUR WORLD IS INFECTIOUS. EVEN IF WE WANTED TO, WE COULD NOT KEEP IT ENTIRELY TO OURSELVES. IT OVERFLOWS OUR HEARTS AND RUNS INTO THE LIVES OF OTHERS.

AFTER THE SHEPHERDS HAD SEEN THE CHRIST CHILD AND REFLECTED UPON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS WONDER, THEY RETURNED GLORIFYING AND PRAISING GOD. IT WAS AS THOUGH LOVE HAD BURST IN THEIR HEARTS, SHOWERING THEIR WORLD WITH JOY. THEY COULD NOT KEEP STILL. THEY HAD TO SHARE CHRIST WITH SOMEONE.

CHRISTMAS IS LIKE THAT TODAY. WHEN WE HEAR "O HOLY NIGHT" OR SEE A CHILD STRUGGLING TO PUT UP A FIRESIDE STOCKING OR SMELL THE GREENNESS OF A CHRISTMAS TREE TOPPED WITH A BETHLEHEM STAR, SOMETHING SNAPS WITHIN US. THE WORLD SEEMS INSTANTLY BATHED IN A NEW LIGHT. FOR A FEW WEEKS, THE ROUTINES WE PURSUE SEEM MIRACULOUSLY TRANSFORMED.

ALL AT ONCE WE FEEL HAPPIER, OUR CONTENANCES ARE BRIGHTER. WE WALK WITH A BRISKER STRIDE, AND WE TREAT OTHER PEOPLE WITH MORE LOVE. SOMETHING SNAPS WITHIN US AT CHRISTMAS TIME, AND WE DISCOVER IN OUR HEARTS GREAT RESERVOIRS OF GOOD WILL, AND GENEROSITY JUST ASKING TO BE TAPPED. SOMETHING SNAPS WITHIN US AT CHRISTMAS TIME AND THE OLD HURTS, THE OLD PREJUDICES, THE OLD WELLS OF CANTANKEROUSNESS ARE NEUTRALIZED AS SURELY AS HONEY TAKES THE BITE OUT OF VINEGAR. WHERE THERE WAS SHARPNESS THERE IS NOW SMOOTHNESS. WHERE THERE WAS PAIN, THERE IS NOW WILLINGNESS TO FORGET. WHERE THERE WAS INERTIA, THERE IS NOW SPIRITUAL DYNAMISM.

THAT IS THE EXPERIENCE OF MANY CHRISTIANS AT CHRISTMAS TIME. SOMETHING SNAPS WITHIN THEM. THEIR LIVES ARE TRANSFORMED. THEY ARE BESIDE THEMSELVES WITH THE JOY OF CHRIST'S LOVE. THEY BECOME KINDER, FRIENDLIER, MORE CONSIDERATE AND MORE GENEROUS. THE OLD DOGGED SELFISHNESS HAS PASSED AWAY, AND IN ITS PLACE THE NEW JOY OF SELFLESSNESS HAS COME. WHERE ONCE THERE WAS PLODDING ATTENTION TO THEMSELVES, AT CHRISTMAS TIME IN MILLIONS OF HUMAN HEARTS, A WONDROUS NEW LOVE ENERGY IS RELEASED. A COMPELLING DESIRE TO SHARE THE LOVE OF CHRIST WITH OTHER PEOPLE IS BORN.

MANY YEARS AGO, IN A BURST OF EXULTATION, PAUL PROCLAIMED "THANKS BE TO GOD FOR HIS INEXPRESSIBLE GIFT." THAT IS THE SPARK PLUG OF ALL CHRISTMAS JOY AND LOVE, THE REALIZATION THAT GOD'S LOVE IS NOT ALOOF, IS NOT AN EMPTY PROMISE, IS NOT AN ILLUSION, BUT RATHER IS A TANGIBLE REALITY THAT TOOK ON OUR FLESH IN A MANGER NEARLY, TWO THOUSAND YEARS AGO.

THANKS BE TO GOD FOR HIS INEXPRESSIBLE GIFT. PAUL UNDERSTOOD, AS WE DO, THAT IN JESUS CHRIST, GOD GAVE TO THE WORLD FOR ALL TIME THE GIFT OF SALVATION AND LONG SUFFERING LOVE. INSTEAD OF ANOTHER SET OF COMMANDMENTS WRITTEN ON COLD STONE, AND INSTEAD OF ANOTHER SERIES OF PROPHECIES SPOKEN FROM HUMAN LIPS, GOD SENT INTO THE WORLD THE MOST INTIMATE AND TANGIBLE OF ALL HIS POSSIBLE GIFTS. HE GAVE TO US HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON. CAN ANY GIFT BE MORE VALUABLE, MORE LOVING, MORE INEXPRESSIBLE? BECAUSE OF THIS GREATEST OF GIFTS, THE APOSTLE PAUL WAS BESIDE HIMSELF, AND SO ARE MANY OF US, ESPECIALLY AT CHRISTMAS TIME.

LIKE PAUL WE ARE SPONTANEOUSLY SWEEPED AWAY BY GREAT JOY AND GRATITUDE. BECAUSE WE WERE FIRST LOVED SO GENEROUSLY BY GOD IN CHRIST, WE ARE COMPELLED IN TURN TO LOVE GENEROUSLY THOSE AROUND US. GOD ENTERED HUMAN HISTORY IN THE FORM OF A COMPASSIONATE, SUFFERING SERVANT. IN THAT ACT AN EVER LENGTHENING CHAIN REACTION OF LOVE WAS BEGUN IN HUMAN HEARTS. IT IS A TRUISM OF CHRISTMAS THAT IF YOU UNDERSTAND AND REVERE THE LOVE BEHIND THE BIRTH OF CHRIST YOU CANNOT HELP BEING MORE LOVING YOURSELF. IT IS AN INESCAPABLE CAUSE AND EFFECT PRINCIPLE OF CHRISTMAS THAT THE MEASURE OF CHRISTMAS' MEANING TO YOU IS THE DEGREE TO WHICH YOU WILL GO TO SHARE CHRIST'S LOVE WITH OTHERS.

TO SHARE CHRIST'S LOVE THE APOSTLE PAUL TRAVELED AROUND THE KNOWN WORLD OF HIS AGE THREE TIMES, BUT TODAY (SHAMEFULLY) THERE ARE MANY CHRISTIANS WHO EVEN AT CHRISTMAS TIME, ARE BARELY WILLING TO WALK TO THE CORNER MAILBOX WITH CHRISTMAS CARDS. MY POINT IS NOT THAT SENDING CARDS IS THE BEST, OR EVEN AN ESSENTIAL, WAY TO SHARE CHRIST'S LOVE AT CHRISTMAS. WHAT I MEAN TO POINT OUT IS THAT FOR MANY WHO CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS, THE CHERISHED PRIVILEGE AND INCLINATION TO GIVE AS GOD HAS GIVEN TO THEM IS STIFLED AND OFTEN SCRAPPED ALTOGETHER.

SUCH CHRISTIANS FAIL TO REALIZE THAT, BY THE NATURE OF CHRISTMAS WHERE THERE IS NO REAL GIVING THERE CAN BE NO REAL CHRISTMAS. SOME PEOPLE APPROACH CHRISTMAS AS THOUGH IT IS JUST A HOLIDAY TO BE KEPT. IT IS NOT. CHRISTMAS IS A GIFT OF JOY THAT FINDS ITS LIFE ONLY IN BEING GIVEN AWAY. CHRIST IS NOT FOR KEEPING; HE IS FOR SHARING.

IN OUR CULTURE THERE IS MUCH THAT DISSUADES CONSCIENTIOUS CHRISTIANS FROM GIVING GENEROUSLY AT CHRISTMAS. I AM SORRY TO SAY THAT THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS GIVING AND CHRISTMAS SHARING IS OFTEN HANDLED UNEVENLY, EVEN FROM THE PULPIT OF OUR CHURCHES. AT THIS TIME OF YEAR, THERE IS QUITE A BIT OF NOISE ABOUT CRASS MATERIALISM, PUTTING CHRIST BACK INTO CHRISTMAS, AND THE FRENZY OF CHRISTMAS SHOPPING. UNDENIABLE, THERE IS GOOD REASON TO DISPARAGE EXPENSIVE CHRISTMAS GIFTS WITH LITTLE OR NO HONEST FEELING BEHIND THEM AND EXPENSIVE CHRISTMAS GIFTS THAT ARE MEANT AS TOKEN SUBSTITUTES FOR REAL CARING. BUT THERE IS ANOTHER SIDE TO THIS ISSUE. CHRISTMAS GIFTS, EVEN EXPENSIVE ONES CAN BE THE VEHICLES FOR OUR SHARING CHRIST WITH ONE ANOTHER.

IT IS NOT GOOD THAT AT LEAST ONE SEASON OF THE YEAR CHRISTIANS ARE APT TO BE SWEEPED OFF THEIR FEET OR PERHAPS EVEN A LITTLE BESIDE THEMSELVES IN ACTING OUT THE GENEROSITY THEY FEEL IS IMPLICIT IN THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT?

I KNOW PEOPLE WHO FEEL GUILTY WHEN THEY ARE NOT ABLE TO PERSONALLY MAKE THEIR CHRISTMAS GIFTS EVEN THOUGH THEY COULD EASILY AFFORD TO BUY THEM ALL. I KNOW PEOPLE WHO PRIDE THEMSELVES ON NOT SUCUMBING TO EXTRAVAGANCE AT CHRISTMAS JUST SO THAT THEY CAN SAY THAT THEY ARE NOT PART OF THE CHRISTMAS PACKAGE RUSH. ARE NOT THESE FEELINGS THE OLD SINS IN NEW CLOTHING? THE POINT IS NOT WHETHER YOU MAKE YOUR GIFTS ARE EXPENSIVE OR INEXPENSIVE. IT DOES NOT MATTER. WHAT MATTERS MOST IS HOW GENEROUSLY YOU GIVE OF YOURSELF.

THE CONCERN IS PERSONAL GENEROSITY, NOT JUST FINANCIAL EXPENSE. I STRONGLY BELIEVE THIS, AND I AGREE WITH TODAY'S FASHIONABLE DICTUM THAT IT IS THE THOUGHT THAT COUNTS IN GIVING. BUT SOMETIMES I CANNOT HELP WONDERING HOW OFTEN PEOPLE PUT THIS DICTUM TO WORK AS A RATIONALIZATION TO COVER UP EVEN FROM THEMSELVES THEIR OWN BASIC UNWILLINGNESS TO BE GENEROUS.

IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, THE GIVER AND HIS OR HER GIFT ARE THE INSEPARABLE ELEMENTS THAT MEASURE THE DEPTH OF CHRIST'S LOVE, WHICH IS SHARED AMONG PEOPLE. GENEROSITY IS A FUNCTION OF BOTH.

I DO NOT MEAN TO IMPLY THAT THE ONLY WORTHWHILE WAYS OF SHARING CHRIST'S LOVE ARE MATERIAL. WE ALL REALIZE THAT THIS WOULD BE A SERIOUS MISTAKE. A WORLD WITHOUT THE SPIRITUAL SHARING OF CHRIST'S LOVE AT CHRISTMAS WOULD BE LESS THAN LIVABLE, LESS THAN WORTHWHILE, AND CONSIDERABLY LESS THAN CHRISTIAN.

EACH ONE OF US HAS IT IN OUR POWER TO MAKE A MULTITUDE OF SPIRITUAL PRESENTS TO OTHERS. EVERYDAY, INNUMERABLE OPPORTUNITIES ARE AFFORDED US TO BE GENEROUS IN SHARING CHRIST'S LOVE. THE LIST OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS AT OUR DISPOSAL IS ALMOST INEXHAUSTIBLE.

THERE IS THE GIFT OF PATIENCE WHEN SOMEBODY IS FUMBLING. CURB YOUR IMPATIENCE AND HELP THE OTHER PERSON TO DO BETTER THE NEXT TIME.

THERE IS THE GIFT OF PRAISE. BE QUICK TO COMMEND AND SLOW TO CONDEMN. A SPOKEN WORD OF COMPLIMENT MEANS A LOT.

THERE IS THE GIFT OF LOYALTY. GIVE SOMEONE ELSE REASON TO FEEL THAT HE OR SHE CAN TRUST YOU IMPLICITLY. THE PERSON ~~may~~ NEED TO LEAN ON THAT TRUST ANOTHER DAY.

THERE IS THE GIFT OF GRATITUDE. NEVER FORGET TO SAY THANK YOU AND NEVER FAIL TO MEAN IT.

THERE IS THE GIFT OF INSPIRATION. PLANT SEEDS OF COURAGE AND ACTION IN OTHER PEOPLE'S HEARTS AND HELP THEM TO STRIVE FOR GREATER ACCOMPLISHMENT AND LASTING SATISFACTION.

THERE IS THE GIFT OF PERSONAL PRESENCE. IN SICKNESS, TROUBLE OR JOY THERE IS NOTHING EQUAL TO YOUR BEING THERE TO SHARE.

NOT EVERYONE LOOKS FORWARD TO CHRISTMAS. UNDOUBTEDLY, YOU KNOW PEOPLE WHO WILL FIND THIS YEAR'S HOLIDAY SEASON PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT—THOSE WHO HAVE RECENTLY SUSTAINED A DEATH IN THE FAMILY OR WHO HAVE FAMILY PROBLEMS OR DEPRESSION OR LONELINESS OR POOR HEALTH. REMEMBER YOUR FRIENDS AND MAKE A SPECIAL EFFORT TO REACH OUT TO THEM TO INCLUDE THEM IN YOUR HOLIDAY THOUGHTS AND ACTIVITIES.

IT MAY SEEM AN IRONIC FACT THAT WHEN A PERSON IS TROUBLED AND EVERYONE IS MAKING MERRY AROUND HER OR HIM, NOT INCLUDING THAT PERSON IN THEIR MERRIMENT, THAT PERSON'S TROUBLES ARE APT TO BECOME DOUBLY DIFFICULT TO COPE WITH. SPARE YOUR FRIENDS THIS UNFORTUNATE CHRISTMAS IRONY. WHERE THEIR ABILITY TO CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS FULLY IS BLOCKED, REACH OUT YOUR HAND TO THEM.

CHRISTMAS IS THE SEASON OF GENEROSITY. IT IS THE SEASON FOR SHARING CHRIST AS COMPLETELY AS POSSIBLE WITH OTHERS. OPEN YOURSELF TO THE SPIRIT OF THIS BLESSED SEASON. DO NOT WORRY

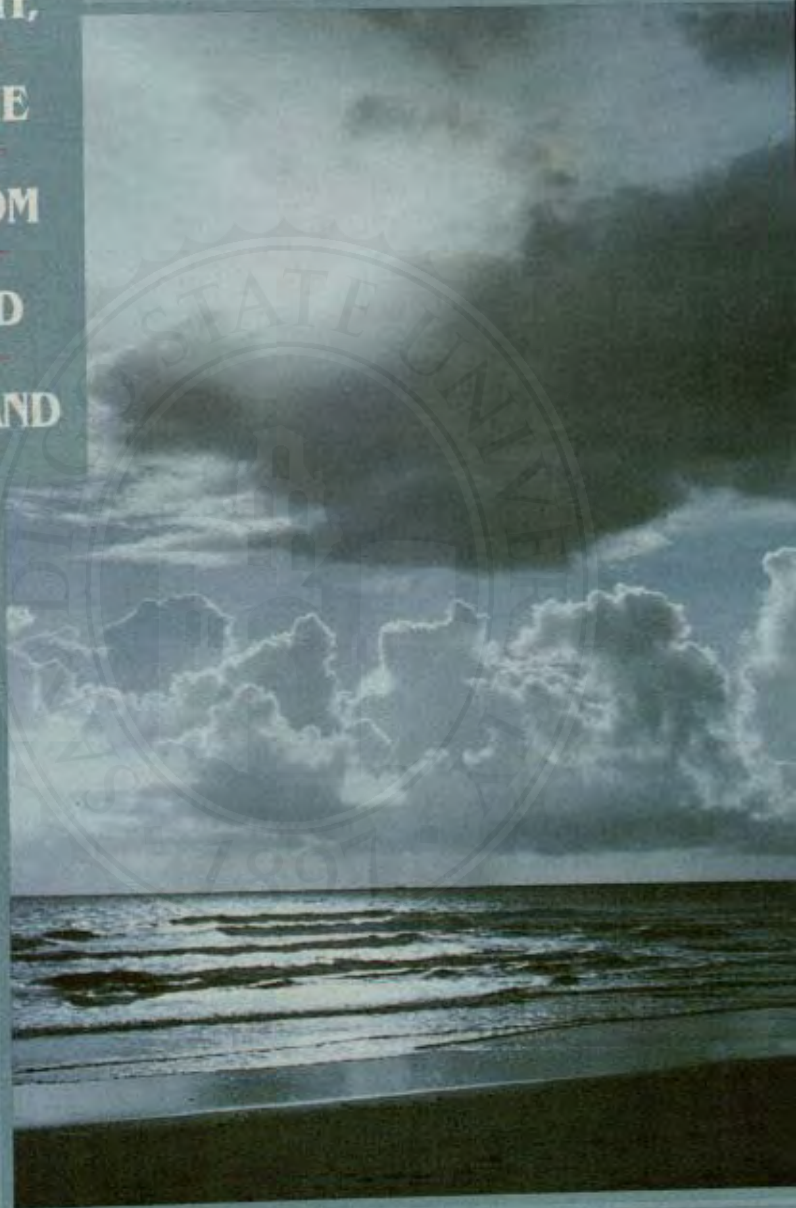
if you are swept off your feet with enthusiasm, if you are BESIDE YOURSELF WITH JOY.

KNOW THAT IN YOUR GREAT GENEROSITY, CHRIST IS BORN AGAIN IN YOU. MAKE YOUR PLACE IN GOD'S EVER LENGTHENING CHAIN REACTION OF LOVE IN THIS WORLD. BE A GIVER OF MANY KINDS OF GIFTS.

LET SOMETHING SNAP IN YOUR LIFE THIS CHRISTMAS SEASON AND REJOICE WITH PAUL, "THANK GOD FOR HIS INEXPRESSIBLE GIFT" SHARE CHRIST.

REPENT,
FOR THE
KINGDOM
OF GOD
IS AT HAND

Matthew 3:2



SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT, DECEMBER 10, 1989

MORNING WORSHIP SERVICE
SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

December 10, 1989

10:30 AM

PREPARATION OF OUR HEARTS FOR WORSHIP

"Let the people be in silent meditation
and prayer upon entering the sanctuary."

WE PRAISE GOD

ORGAN PRELUDE

Organist

CHORAL INTROIT "For Jesus Christ is Born" Chancel Choir

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*HYMN OF PRAISE "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing" # 184

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: In Advent we celebrate the coming of the Promised
One. The One in whom dwells the spirit of God.

People: The spirit of wisdom and understanding.

Leader: The spirit of counsel and might.

People: The spirit of knowledge and awe.

All: Let us bear witness to your fulfillment of this
promise in Jesus, by letting the spirit that
was in him be in us also.

WE CONFESS OUR SINS

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (In Unison)

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, who didst cause light to
shine out of darkness in the advent of our Lord Jesus Christ
to take away the sins of the world: We humbly confess our
transgressions and implore Thy forgiveness. We are ashamed
of that within us which makes neither good will to others
nor for growth in goodness in our lives. We ask Thee that
the Spirit of Christ may be born anew within us, and that
we may glorify His nativity with hearts of compassion, deeds
of kindly service, and the spirit of good will to all mankind.
Amen.

DECLARATION OF PARDON

*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH: "The Apostles Creed" p 12
The Hymn Book

LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLES

Mr. and Mrs. Ben Brown
and family

WE GIVE THANKS TO GOD

ANTHEM "Glory to God in the Highest" Chancel Choir
John Innes

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Leader: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them to the Lord.

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Leader: Let us pray.

Pastoral Prayer

Choral Response

"Away in a Manger"

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INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS

RITUAL OF FRIENDSHIP

"Joy to the World"

GIVING OF TITHES AND OFFERINGS

OFFERTORY MUSIC

Chancel Choir

"Sing Gloria" - Davis

Sharon Coleman & Mabel Henderson, Soloists

*DOXOLOGY

"Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow"

OFFERTORY PRAYER

THREEFOLD AMEN

GOD SPEAKS TO US

SCRIPTURE

Luke 2:8-20

MUSICAL SELECTION

Chancel Choir

"Do You Hear What I Hear" - arr. Simeone

SERMON

Rev. George W. Smith

"Sharing Christ"

*INVITATIONAL HYMN

"O Come, All Ye Faithful" # 193

*BENEDICTION

CHORAL BENEDICTION

Chancel Choir

"Go Tell It On The Mountain"

ORGAN POSTLUDE

* Congregation standing
++++ Worshiper will be seated

TO OUR GUESTS - You are welcome to our worship service and all activities of the church. Please help us to know you by signing the record of attendance sheet as you enter the foyer. You are invited to meet with others in the Fellowship Hall for refreshments. Please come again and invite your friends and neighbors to come with you.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE CHRIST AS YOUR SAVIOR, we invite you to come to the front of the sanctuary during the invitational hymn. Elders Bertha Pendleton and Jon Curry will be at the front of the sanctuary to greet you.

HOSTING THE FELLOWSHIP HOUR TODAY will be Mrs. Freddie Jackson.

CHRIST UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SAN DIEGO

3025 Fir Street at 30th
San Diego, CA 92102

PHONE: 239-2346/2347

OFFICE HOURS: 9 AM to 2 PM

MINISTER:	Rev. George W. Smith
ASSISTANT TO THE MINISTER FOR COMMUNITY AFFAIRS:	Mr. Donald Gullans
PARISH ASSOCIATE:	Rev. Burton S. Smith
CHANCEL CHOIR DIRECTOR:	Mrs. Dolores E. Stevens
YOUTH CHOIR DIRECTOR:	Mrs. Teena Cross
YOUTH CHOIR PIANIST:	Mr. Victor Manieson
ORGANIST:	Ms. Juanita Dentham
CHURCH SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT:	Ms. Carolyn Y. Smith
SECRETARY/BOOKKEEPER:	Ms. Susan L. Gengor