

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, January 11, 2022
Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN

“PUTTING CHRISTMAS AWAY”

READING: Matthew 2:13-18 – When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.” So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called my son.” When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: “A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning. Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.”

Last weekend I had two of my oldest grandchildren staying with us while their parents went away for a long weekend. Dan had said to me, “Don’t be afraid to put them to work if there’s something you need done.” So I took him up on that offer – on Sunday afternoon I had them take down the big Christmas tree we always put up in the living room. It’s a ten-foot artificial tree that’s a bear to put up and almost as much trouble to take down. I brought up some containers and set them to work taking all the ornaments off. Then I pulled down all the lights for them. The tree comes apart in five or six sections. We put each section in a garbage bag to keep the dust off during the year, and I had those two carry everything down into the basement for me. Then I put the furniture back where it belonged, and “Voila!” Christmas was put away!

Well, not exactly, because I still have all the other decorations to put away on Monday. I need to take down the outdoor lights, put the Holy Family down in the basement, take the roping off the stairway banister, take out what was a live tree from the basement, and all the rest. It takes a while to put Christmas away at my house.

It doesn’t take nearly as long for a lot of other folks. Meijer had all their Christmas stuff consolidated on the Sunday after Christmas. They were busy filling the shelves with spring stuff. Kroger had shelves full of Valentine candy three days after Christmas. Some people never bothered to decorate anything, so they had an easy time of it. And the more industrious folks went right to work on the 26th and put everything away while the weather was nice.

King Herod did his best to put away Christmas in a more permanent fashion, didn’t he? Made nice with the Magi in hopes they would lead him directly to this infant threat he was told of. When that didn’t pan out, he sent his goon squad to Bethlehem and its environs with orders to kill any little boy age 2 and under. He figured if he couldn’t make a precision strike, then the shotgun approach might work just as well. What were a few innocents if it meant the security of his throne? Didn’t bother him a bit. He just wanted to put away Christmas before this whole thing could take root. He wasn’t going to take any chances.

Sad that so many people can’t wait to put away Christmas as quickly as possible. After the cookies, the gifts, the tree, and the dinner, they’re on to the “next thing” whatever that might be. Not so for the people of God. Even when Christmas season is over and Epiphany comes, we really never put away Christmas. The fact that God comes to us in the flesh in the person of his Son, Jesus, and puts into motion the whole act of salvation is something we never put away nor forget. We thrill at the audacity of it! We rejoice at the love it shows us! We are amazed at the way Christmas fulfills Old Testament prophecies, one after another! We hum the tunes or ask Alexa to play Christmas carols even as we lovingly wrap and put away all the

decorations! We put away the stuff, but we never ignore nor forget what a magnificent gift God gave to the world on that night in that stable in the little town of Bethlehem.

So one more time just for joy and just because, "Merry Christmas to you and yours!" May God bless and keep you safe and well until that season comes again in three hundred and some days! But the meaning, the power, and the joy of Christmas remain in your heart and in your soul always. Never put away Christmas where it can't be found. Amen.

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENT(S):

1) **GRIEFSHARE:** Pastor Woods will be leading a class that has brought comfort and healing to many people in the past few years. It's called GriefShare and it is for anyone, member or non-member, who has lost someone important to them and has been struggling with the grief that event has brought. For you or anyone you know who is still hurting from the death of a loved one, GriefShare can make a big difference. It starts on Sunday, January 16th at 3:00-5:00 PM.