

**WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, December 22, 2020**  
**Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN**

**“What a Mess!”**

**READING: Matthew 1:18-25 – This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: “The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” – which means, “God with us.” When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.**

First of all I want to wish each of you a Blessed Christmas for you and for your family. I prefer to say “blessed” rather than “merry”. Not everyone’s Christmas is going to be merry this year. Some have lost precious loved ones whose absence will be noted with sorrow. Some have been battling serious ailments that rob them of merriment. And, all of us have been affected in various ways by the COVID pandemic. In our house our son, Andy, and his family will be staying in Wisconsin this year rather than coming home for the holidays. It’ll be the first time our three grandchildren, Lilly, Matthew, and Lucas, will not be with us for Christmas. In fact it’s the first time in his 43 years that Andy himself won’t be celebrating in our house. So “merry” just doesn’t cut it.

On the other hand, “blessed” covers all of us who celebrate the true meaning and promise of Christmas. Since Jesus came into the world with the expressed purpose of saving sinners, each and every one of us who believe he is our Savior and Redeemer are blessed. And, whatever our circumstances this Christmas, we will have a Blessed Christmas because Jesus gives us reason to thank God, praise his name, and to rejoice in his grace.

Our text today is the same one I used last week when I railed against the pagan/commercial interests who delight in bringing us characters, decorations, and tales that have little or nothing to do with the true story of Christmas. (Don’t get me started!) Today I want to point out something quite different in this familiar reading. In the first 2 sentences we have word of an unwanted/unexpected pregnancy, a teenage mother, a husband who thinks he’s been jilted, talk of public disgrace, and thoughts of divorce. Wow! What a mess!

That sounds like OUR times, doesn’t it? We have all seen or even experienced some or all of those circumstances in the lives of our family and friends. Sad things, hard things, scary things that real people meet all too often. That’s the mess that Jesus came into. Consider: The sinless Son of God, all-powerful Creator who holds the universe in his hands, comes into

our messy world to bring light and hope to our messy lives and does it by allowing himself to be born a baby in a messy family situation. As St. John says in his first epistle, "How great is the love the Father has lavished upon us...!"

Then let me point you to Matthew's use of Isaiah's prophecy: "...and they shall call his name Immanuel, which is 'God with us.'" Did you catch that? It isn't "God above us", or "God watching us", or "God next to us", or "God thinking of us", but God WITH us. Yup! Right here in our messy lives, in our messy world, he is WITH us. He came as one of us to love us and to save us and to give us hope. He did that by stepping into our sandals and experiencing life in this world, and all of it he did without sin. Amazing!

And, one last thing. When Jesus was about to ascend to his Father's throne, what last message did he leave with his disciples, and through them, to us? "And, lo, I am WITH you always, to the end of the age." At his start he is "God with us" and at his leaving he is "God with us". He is and always will be our God who is WITH us in every and all circumstances. THAT'S WHY I will say to you again, have a "BLESSED CHRISTMAS" because Jesus is Immanuel, "God WITH us". Amen.

**PRAYER:**

**ANNOUNCEMENT(S):**

"GIFTS FOR KIDS" – Thank you, thank you, thank you to all who helped us gift children in needy home again this year. For the money and toys and games you donated, for the shoppers who spent time and energy finding just the right stuff, for the wrappers who have wrapped dozens and dozens of gifts, and for Karen in the office who took and made dozens and dozens of phone calls, to all of you I say thank you and God bless you. We provided gifts to 67 children, as well as teenagers and a few mothers, with the last count standing at 86! We made Christmas a little less stressful for single moms and families who could not afford much this year. We made a difference. Thanks. Couldn't begin to do that without you! **CHRISTMAS SERVICES:** Christmas Eve at 5:00 and 11:00. Both of these will be live online. Communion in both services as well. Christmas morning at 10:00. Not online. Communion.