

Christmas Program

The story of Christmas begins with a need and a promise.
The need is brought about by our own sin.
Sin is what we bring to the story and nothing else.
We have no merit or worth to place before God as a bargaining chip.
But only a plaintive cry for mercy.
That is the song that we bring to God. We call it the Kyrie.
And it is the one song that we sing together every single time that we gather.
For it is the root and foundation of the entire Christian life.
And, it is a song that God always hears.
And when God hears our cry for mercy--for undeserved help and care--God is doing what God does. He is most truly being God.
And His first response to our need is to give a promise.
I will send you a Seed who will crush Satan's head.
I will provide a Lamb for the burnt offering.
Believe this promise, and I will count it to you as righteousness.
I will forgive your trespasses and remember your sins no more.
When David received this forgiveness for his hideous crimes of adultery and murder, he broke forth in a song that we still sing today.
Create in me a clean heart, O God! Now the shapeless cry for Mercy has been given definition--God Himself has showed us what we need.
And we pray for a new heart with full confidence that He will give it.
And the WAY that God gives you a new heart is through a new birth - a new man.
John the Baptist is His forerunner and John sings about Him: "Behold the Lamb of God" the promised one -- "He takes away the sins of the world."
And this same song of John is sung today to point out the presence of Christ.
At the altar of Holy Communion - there is that same Lamb of God.
For He is a man conceived by God / He is God conceived by a Virgin.
There is most certainly something new! Mary becomes a sacred vessel.
And so she breaks forth in song: The Magnificat praises God for turning everything on its head.
The proud are scattered, the mighty are put down. But the lowly are regarded and the hungry are fed.
In this song we are taught to expect the greatest things in the lowliest places.
And this pattern of God's action holds true throughout the salvation story.
For when God is born into the world, it is not in a palace with red carpets.
It is rather in a stable - laid in a manger.
His birth is announced not to Herod the king of the Jews, but to shepherds keeping watch over their flocks by night.
And the signs that they are given could hardly be more ordinary.
"These are the signs that you shall mark: the swaddling clothes and manger dark."
Humble and ordinary, to be sure, but tell tale signs nonetheless.
These signs helped the shepherds find the infant about whom the angels sang.
And again, what exactly did the angels sing?
"Glory be to God on high -- and on earth peace, good will toward man."

They tell us that God's great glory consists of this: that He establishes peace again between God and men.
And that this peace also quells all the strife on earth.
That is what makes Jesus, the bread for the whole world.
And that is why He is born in Bethlehem, "the house of bread."
Forty days later, He enters into the old Temple building.
The building about which Haggai had prophesied that it would have a greater glory than Solomon's temple ever had.
And now his prophecy is true -- because Jesus has now entered the building.
So aged Simeon sings, "My eyes have seen Thy salvation...the glory of Thy people Israel."
These are also apt words for us to sing at the close of the service.
For in the bread and the cup, we too see God's glory just exactly as the angels said.
For the glory of God is that you are made Holy and partakers of His Son.
And this glory is not limited to the Jews of old.
But He is also a light to lighten us Gentiles.
And that is why the magi from the east were also drawn into the story.
For we too, are invited to hold the Glory of God in our hands.
The child who is destined for spear and nails to pierce Him through.
The Word made flesh whose birth you now know through the Word spoken and sung today.
So most gracious Lord, may we Everemore be led by Thee. AMEN.