

DECEMBER 28, 2019 SUMMARY SERMON-JOHN TSCHUDY

SCRIPTURE LESSON ISAIAH 63:7-9, HEBREWS 2:10-18, MATTHEW 2:13-23

The Sunday after Christmas is always interesting. We were instructed in seminary that the congregation that came on the Sunday after Christmas was usually the most faithful members. BUT there wouldn't be many there. People were still traveling or just leaving for a family vacation or just tired after Christmas and would stay home. To a large extent I've found this to be true, which is unfortunate on this "In between" Sunday. We're still singing a lot of Christmas carols but Christmas is over. But it isn't yet New Years so it's tough to focus on it.

If we let the scripture guide us we are reminded in the Gospel Lesson is not of some great moral teaching but rather that for Jesus, even as an infant, life was filled with peril. He and his family had to literally run for their lives. Matthew ties the story with a prophecy but for us it should be a reminder that continues today. To be a Christian and follow God's way in Jesus will often put us at odds with the world, which may bring us trouble and suffering. Following Jesus, needs to be understood as meaning we may have to suffer, just as Christ found because we are always to be following the example of Christ, not making concessions to the world.

We cannot take it lightly that as the author of Hebrews puts it, our salvation comes about through Christ's suffering. Further we must understand this as more than a gesture of love for our own good. Jesus says repeatedly in the Gospels that we need to be ready to pick up our crosses, and endure suffering in service to God, just as he does. In part according to Hebrews the reason for that is we are all brothers and sister of each other, in the family of God. As the oldest brother Jesus has set the standard in how he lived and how he died, we are expected to follow, and we like real life don't get to pick our parents or brothers and sisters. We must include all that God includes in the family, not pick and choose who we like and will serve. Like Jesus, we may not like the things God calls us to do. We too may wish to get out of them because of the suffering involved. In other words we must have the Faith to follow Christ's example in how we live and it is this that makes salvation possible. But like Jesus we are to put our own desires aside and do what God calls us to do.

Like Isaiah we are called by God to "Recount the gracious deeds of the Lord." By that I mean we are all called to through our words and our deeds show and tell others about what God has done for us. We do this not because we will get something in return for doing it, like salvation, because we don't. Instead according to Isaiah we will do it in thanksgiving for all that God has done for us. This of course requires us to recognize all that God has done for us, as well as recognizing how much God is still offering to us in this life and the life to come. It starts with doing what Christ did, putting others before ourselves.

I've heard it said often that to be a Christian what is required is "Giving your life to Jesus." But biblically speaking what that comes out requiring is putting following God's way before our own comfort and safety. Faith is required to make that kind of commitment that God will see us through, not always in the world's terms. But in ways that best serve God in thanks for all that God has done for us. Amen