

Christmas Day Reflection

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Date: 25 December 2016

[0:00] Amen. I will dwell in your midst, and you shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you.

! Now, it was a really interesting learning experience for me, and by interesting, I mean that it really challenged my faith in humanity, which is not necessarily a bad thing.

I found out firsthand how awful people could be to food service and retail workers during the holidays, and that's quite bad indeed. Instead of Christmas cheer, I found myself dealing with a bunch of Grinchies.

So I tried to deal with it by remembering that I had no idea what difficulties each of those difficult people might be dealing with around the holidays.

Holidays can be tough for a lot of people, and people do have a tendency to lash out when they're hurting. Now, so our tendency as people is to lash out when things go wrong, or to withdraw from other people.

[1:31] But praise God, that is not what He does when things are tough. He draws near to us to heal us and to save us. We saw that in our reading from Zechariah for this morning.

Those being addressed are a people who have had the awful experience of exile. They haven't been in the best of situations, and really they brought it on themselves.

So how does God treat them? Well, not in the way that we would be tempted to treat those who had stumbled into a mess of their own making. He doesn't tell them it's too bad, that they're on their own.

What does He do? Promises to draw near to them, doesn't He? Because that's the kind of God He is. Full of mercy, full of compassion.

He promises to restore. Isn't that what we see in our reading? Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for behold, I come, and I will dwell in your midst, declares the Lord.

[2:39] I will come, and dwell in your midst. Now, how is that for amazing? It's not a stretch to say that this passage looks forward to what God would do in Jesus for its ultimate fulfillment.

Which I think is why we're reading it this morning on Christmas Day. And then what do we see when we look on at verse 11? Many nations shall join themselves to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people.

I will dwell in your midst, and you shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you. So what is God saying to them? Well, first, if you read Zechariah, He is certainly saying, You, my people, have messed up.

I have cause to be angry with you. You are in a mess that you have made for yourselves. But, I will draw near to you.

I will save you. I will dwell with you. Not only will I restore you, my people, but I will join myself to many other nations as well, so that those who were not my people become my people.

[3:54] Isn't the love, isn't the grace of God extravagant? He always goes above and beyond to redeem and to save.

That's what He does. Today, we remember that He came to dwell with us. We remember the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He didn't cast us away. He didn't leave us in our mess. He didn't leave us in exile. He didn't leave us in darkness. Jesus came for us.

He became one of us to bear our sorrows and our iniquities. He became one of us to take away our sins. He became one of us to taste death on our behalf and to defeat it so we could have eternal life.

Jesus came to dwell with us. This morning, let's remember that He isn't just some prop in the manger. He came to dwell with us to save us because He loves us.

[5 : 02] We each have an invitation this morning, one that I hope we don't let pass us by, to know Jesus in a deeper way, to grow in our relationship with Him.

We celebrate an amazing thing this morning. May we not let the reality of that pass by unnoticed. Jesus has come to dwell with us.

And we who are in darkness, who are in exile, who are in sin, can now have a relationship with the Lord. May each of us do just that.

This day, may each of us in a deeper way, come to know and come to dwell with the One who came to dwell with us. In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.