

Christmas Eve, Year A 2019
The Church of the Redeemer, Greenville, SC
December 24, 2019
The Rev. Catherine L. Tatem

Isaiah 9:2-7 Psalm 96 Titus 2:11-14 Luke 2:1-20

Merry Christmas!

We gather this night in an evening full of mystery and of anticipation. In this first service of Christmas, we meet the long-awaited Christ-child. We enter Christmas day in the darkness of night; we arrive in darkness and leave filled with the light of Christ.

To everyone – come in, come in! Come in if you who know the Lord. Come in if you do not know the Lord and are not too sure about this baby named Jesus. Come in if you have questions, come in if you are curious. Come in if you do not believe; you may fill that unnamed longing in your heart. Come in – it is a new day. Jesus is born and with us this night, this new day named Christmas.

We are allowed this night and always to come to Jesus as He has come to us: vulnerable, helpless, loved, and adored. Jesus comes to us in a way that we can all reach him. Who could approach a Savior dressed in royalty, as a King? We would tremble at his feet. Who could approach a Savior surrounded by armies and weapons; we would fight and kill, or flee in fear. Who could approach this God who ousted us from Eden? We fear seeing His face. We fear letting God know where we are and who we are. But it is a vulnerable baby Jesus who enters our lives.

Jesus. Caesar fears him. Those who rule with absolute power know nothing of the power of the Christ child. Those who rule with hatred and vengeance know nothing of the love of Jesus. We said “there’s no room,” and left him outside before we could even see him. Perhaps we did not know that John the Baptizer knows from his mother’s womb who Jesus is. Shepherds – the lowest sorts of labor – hear angels sing, proclaiming Jesus. He is here! He is here!

And so, you are welcome. *We* are welcome to meet Jesus, whoever we are, wherever we are. Since we meet Jesus in a stable – a barn! – it is possible that we will meet him anywhere. A God who would birth our savior amongst farm animals is likely to put Jesus in front of us in the most unlikely places.... Ah, my friends, you are meeting Jesus, and the world will never be the same: not for doubters,

believers, and all of us in-between; for God comes to us announces a new beginning in the world and in ourselves.

We who are also vulnerable are loved and adored! See God's son. Breathe in the sights, smells, and wonder. Jesus is here. David Lose writes it this way:

“Jesus comes in a way that shows us that God is committed to giving us not just more of the same, but something more. Christ comes, that is, not just to give us more of the life we know, but new and abundant life altogether. For in Christ we have the promise that God will not stop until each and all of us have been embraced and caught up in God's tremendous love and have heard the good news that ‘unto you this day is born a savior, Christ the Lord.’”

This night, walk with Mary and Joseph to the place in which Jesus enters our hearts. Come in! Come closer. Let the light and love of Christ fill us. Let the glory and the song of the angels be part of who you are, part of who we are in greeting the Christ child this night.

Come in, come in! Merry, holy, blessed Christmas, we greet thee.