

## **Children's Message, 12/8/19**

1. We just heard Paul say that Jesus "took on the trouble of the troubled."
2. Nobody likes to get into trouble.
3. But to be honest with you, it happens to all of us.
4. We all make mistakes. And we all have trouble happen to us as well.
5. But God decided not to leave us human beings alone in all our trouble-making.
6. He came to us in Jesus.
7. God is a Spirit which means God is invisible and untouchable; kind of like goodness and love and peace. They are invisible, untouchable things from God.
8. And that is why we get into so much trouble. We do not trust them enough because we cannot see or hear or touch them.
9. So God sent His Spirit into a human body-- into Jesus. So that we could finally see and hear and feel God.
10. And then God sent His Spirit into our bodies...so that people can see and hear and feel God through us.
11. So remember that God wants you to show others his invisible love and peace and goodness through your words and actions...

### **Christmas Lights in our Homes Leading to Lighting the World Based on Romans 15:1-14, David Jahnke, 12/8/19**

I spoke last week about how the Christians in Rome were at the epicenter of the transformation of Greco-Roman society. And this transformation of human society in the direction of the Kingdom of God has been the purpose of Christianity ever since. And we get a couple of big hints as to how that happened in Rome.

First off, Paul reminded the Christians there that they were the beginnings of this amazing work of God to gather in all His people and that all of this was heralded by God's prophets. "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples praise him" said the Psalmist and Isaiah's prophecy had come true also! "The [Messiah] shall come; the one who rises to rule the Gentiles; in him the Gentiles shall hope."

I imagine Paul saying, "Remember me telling you about how the unseen god made himself known and did miracle after miracle. And though your leaders put him to death, he rose from the grave and appeared to many of us to show us that

eternal life was before us no matter what happens here on earth! And now it is your turn to welcome others and show God to them just as God has welcomed and shown himself to you.”

And the Romans did that in their homes and churches which at that point in time were essentially one and the same. And this points to God wanting our homes to be sacred places where His Word is studied and proclaimed.

So our Christmas tree went up last Sunday night. And the boys and I had a great time trading songs from our collections while putting on the lights and ornaments. There is a great feeling that arises in these moments and that feeling is much more than sentimentality. It is the power of heavenly peace, joy and hope which comes to life in our homes and world because of Christ’s incarnation on earth.

And I hope that’s the case for you already this Christmas season. Because we are just like the Roman Christians. We are at the epicenter of power in the western world and we have been brought into the fold of God’s love and His plan for the world. The light of Christ at Christmas and throughout the year has been powerfully present in your homes from the days of your youth into the present. Isaiah’s prophecy comes true through you whenever you sing Joy to the World and O Come all Ye Faithful...come now you faithful ones and worship the newborn King.

And now the question becomes whether that light will gradually dim in you or in your descendants’ homes. Or will it be magnified throughout history as was the case with the Romans?

When I was lost in the wilderness, I had so many saints patiently come to my side and help me to gradually see the light. First was my sister welcoming me to her Tennessee home to live with her and her little ones. She patiently listened to her agnostic little brother and wisely defended the Christian faith in our philosophical discussions. She also encouraged me to go to church in Tennessee, even though I had my doubts.

I left for Korea and had many memorable experiences with Christians. One was my adult student who invited me to lunch and after some nice conversation, he

asked me about faith matters. I shared my respect for Jesus but my general lack of faith. He nodded and smiled and shared his reasons for believing.

Another older student invited me to go hiking and to the DMZ with him and eventually asked about whether I was a church-goer. I let him know that nature was where I worshipped the divine while hiking or running. He said, "That's great but we should worship God in community as well."

Lastly, I met some ex-pats like me who were my own age. And among all my foreign friends and associates who were generally agnostic or atheist like me, the only three I got close to were Christians. And I told my sister this and she said, "That is great but I am not super surprised as I have been praying that you meet some Christian friends for years."

All these people were all humble and gentle and yet bold and unafraid to talk about faith matters. They were all non-judgmental and kind as well, all of which provides a perfect model for Christian friendship, which brings us full circle to what the apostle Paul understood to be the role of the Roman Christians. They were gentiles who had come to know the friendship of God and felt called to share that friendship with their neighbors whom they invited to break bread and drink wine and sing songs with them.

So do the same this holiday season. As you decorate and enjoy your homes, let all of the Christmas symbols remind you that your home is a sacred place. Turn to the sacred book and read some passages I will send out this week. Make every meal a sacred one by remembering God in prayer. And as you are fed in these ways by God's Spirit, start thinking about what you will do to make sure your descendants will still know the wonders of Christmas and Christianity. How will you make sure your own children and grandchildren are formed weekly and daily in the Faith of our Fathers and Mothers? What will you do in this regard for the children and youth and parents of our communities whose faith is wavering and ambivalent and unsure? It is time to spread the faith which is the foundation of the joy and peace and wonder of this season. All this through the one who can do...

### **Children's Message and Sermon Questions for Reflection and Application**

1. How did Jesus “take on the troubles of the troubled” as The Message paraphrase of the Bible puts it? At the first Christmas? In his life? In his death?
2. Do you know any troubled souls who could use a call or visit?
3. How did a small band of believers change Rome?
4. Is it possible for us to do the same? How?
5. What eternal light has shined and continues to shine in your homes during this season? For what ultimate purpose?
6. What saints (friends/ family/ church members) have led you deeper into heavenly purposes over the years? How can you follow in their footsteps?
7. Who might you invite and welcome to your homes and/or church for holiday services? Have invitations been extended to you?
8. Remembering Christ’s call to continuously “shake the dust off of our feet” when people do not accept invitations, is there any reason to be afraid or timid in this regard?
9. Might you be intentional about Advent devotional time either personally or with your family in order to remember the light and love in which you live and move and have your being?
10. What can our church do better to help you, yours or our society?