

baptism
absolution
communion



Thoughts on Christmas Day

Song:

“God With Us” by All Sons & Daughters

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=udJT-LMnls>

Scripture Lessons:

Matthew 3:13-17, Hebrews 9:11-28, and Matthew 26:26-29.

What are your thoughts on this Christmas Day, 2019? As a church, we've just come through a very blessed Advent and now we head into the rest of the church year. Over the past 25 days we have gathered together a little bit extra each week to tackle three topics that directly relate to our precious, Advent King.

The first week we gathered together around the topic that was one of the earliest in Jesus' ministry: **baptism**. He was baptized in the Jordan, a river that still exists today, and at this moment we see a beautiful, Trinitarian moment: the Son being baptized, the Holy Spirit descending as a dove, and the voice of the Father speaking from the heavens. Christ connects with us through baptism by making us members of His family.

Even if you aren't able to gather with your blood family this day know this: as a baptized child of God you are a living, breathing member of the most important family out there.

December 11 brought us en masse for the study of **absolution**. During the Holocaust lived a German pastor named Dietrich Bonhoeffer who was a staunch member of the resistance. He helped lead a body called the Confessing Church, which was illegal under the Nazi Regime. Bonhoeffer is famous for his juxtaposition of cheap grace and costly grace. Inexpensive versus expensive. When someone is truly absolved, that is expensive. It is expensive because we need to forget about our own self in order to bring the other person up to par. Jesus, the one whose birth we celebrate today, did this for us when He went to the cross.

We all have trouble forgiving those who have wronged us, but in addition to loving because He first loved us we can truly say that we forgive and absolve because He first forgave and absolved us.

Communion. We are this side of heaven for the entirety of our earthly lives. Through the highs and lows we are still here. When things get tough we know that our thoughts can drift into the realm of loneliness, that we have been forgotten, and that we have been forsaken. For the entirety of our earthly lives, the earth tries to tell us that we are alone. Not so much when we look at the sacrament of communion. We hear the words of Jesus “this is my body ... this is my blood” and we know that He is truly with us. Our hearts can rest assured that we are not alone. Christmas proves this. The people of the Old Testament were waiting and waiting and waiting for a sign from God. They were feeling the pangs of loneliness and wondered where He was. In comes Christ. Now begins the Life that will result in salvation being paid for.

If you are struggling with thoughts of being alone and thinking that God is far from you, may this time of year remind you that all of us are never outside of God's grip. What we celebrate at Christmas is God himself coming to earth to stand right with us in the crowd. The communion table is the place for us to come when we are feeling alone, broken, and forsaken. Though we live in a faulty world, the true Body and Blood present in communion never fail.

Christmas is here. The packages are unwrapped. Food is in the oven. **Messiah is born.** Each of these three topics we have studied during Advent help us to see that Jesus wants us, believes in us, and loves us. No matter where you are remember those things and share them with your loved ones this day.

Merry Christmas. Christ is born in Bethlehem.