

A Note from Pastor Nathan

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses...
Hebrews 4:15

Christmas is about hope, peace, joy and love. These are happy themes inspiring pleasant emotions. Most of our Christmas songs are written about these things. And there is nothing wrong with celebrating at Christmas.

Life happens, however, and our Christmas seasons are often tainted by grief or sorrow. Feelings of loss and despair can overwhelm us and drown out our Christmas joy. There are circumstances which make it very hard to actually celebrate at Christmas.

In some of us, this predicament brings up a sense of shame. “What’s wrong with me? Why can’t I be happy like I’m supposed to? Look at everyone else. Come on, it’s Christmas!” It is possible to feel like a bad person for not being happy at Christmas. It is also possible to mask deep inward pain under the guise of celebration.

But there is no shame in feeling sorrow or pain at Christmastime. None. There’s a sense in which that *was* Jesus’ Christmas experience. The birth of Jesus was the unveiling of “Immanuel, God *with* us.” Christmas is about God’s deliberate, personal entrance into our world of suffering. Since the children had flesh and blood, Jesus too would be made like us in every way. He would get acquainted with our suffering. The manger was the entrance ramp for the highway to the cross. It would not be an easy, happy road for the Man of Sorrows.

Christ came into the world and made our sufferings His sufferings. As we follow Him, His sufferings become our sufferings. In this crucible of shared hardship, new depths of relationship with Jesus may be forged. We enter into suffering and find that Jesus is already there. And He is there with authentic compassion. If Christmas was the entry point for the Son of God into the sufferings of the world, our sufferings at Christmas just might be an entry point into the heart of Jesus.

Our hardships might be opportunities for conversations with Jesus. I’m talking about stillness, prayer, and reflection during the carols and the readings of the season. I’m talking about carving out time to be attentive to the presence of the Crucified One. I’m talking about crying out to Him from the depths of our despair, and finding that He is nearer than we ever realized, and that He is pained and grieved alongside us. We might learn something about the love of the One who was wounded for the wounded. In conversations about our wounds, Jesus just might bring new measures of healing.

All of this makes for pleasant writing but it is difficult in practice. I don’t like *thinking* about the hard things of my life, much less *deliberately bringing those subjects up*, even if it is to Jesus! I’d rather escape and ignore.

But consider this: Is not hope stronger once it has been restored after a season of hopelessness? Is not peace more satisfying after an encounter with strife? Is not joy more meaningful after a dark valley of despair? Is not love more refreshing after an experience of abandonment?

I can’t compare my experience with yours, and I can’t pretend to know the depths of the hard things you’ve faced, or are facing. But it just might be that, after these awful things have apparently stolen our hope or peace or joy or love, we could end up with deeper and more meaningful versions of each.

The Lord is close to the broken-hearted. The Lord is near to all who call on Him. What if our hardships became entry points into new conversations with Jesus, new encounters with His wounds, and new depths of His healing? That is our daunting but enticing invitation.

Let every heart prepare Him room!

Nathan

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December
2018

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Bright Beginnings Daycare: 812-384-0400
Bright Beginnings Preschool: 812-384-2647

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2 Communion	3	4 6:30 Trustees	5 9:00 Bible Study 10:30 150 th Anniv. Planning Meeting	6 6:30 Deacons	7 6:30 Preschool Christmas Program	8
9 9:00 Kingdom Kids 6:00 Cantata	10	11	12 9:00 Bible Study 10:00 Bright Beginnings Board	13 6:30 Congregational Meeting	14	15
16 4:00 Caroling	17	18	19 9:00 Bible Study	20	21 5-7pm Parsonage Open House	22
23 9:00 Kingdom Kids	24 7:00 Christmas Eve Service	25 CHRISTMAS!	26 NO Bible Study this week	27	28	29
30	31					

Deacon of the Month <i>Debra Hudson</i>	Trustee of the Month <i>Eric Moody</i>	Usher of the Month <i>Bob Templeton</i>	Greeters <i>Jason Nicholson</i>
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Reoccurring Weekly Activities @ FBC

Mondays: 10:00 a.m. Enhanced Fitness - FH 6:30 p.m. Cub Scouts – FH	Wednesdays: 6:15 p.m. FLAMES - CLC
Tuesdays: 6:30 p.m. Girl Scouts - FH	Thursdays: 6:00 a.m. Men's Breakfast 10:00 a.m. Enhanced Fitness – FH 11:00 a.m. Cottage Prayer Group 6:30 p.m. Boy Scouts - FH 6:30 p.m. Gideons (3 rd Thurs. each month) – FH

Sound System	
2 nd	Paul Schmidt
9 th	Braden Hudson
16 th	TBD
23 rd	Eric Moody
30 th	Eric Moody

Prayers	
2 nd	John Bailey
9 th	Kathy Ham
16 th	TBD
23 rd	TBD
30 th	TBD

Nursery Care	
2 nd	Sandy Clark
9 th	Karla Pruett/Calvin Myers
16 th	Michelle & Ivy Foxworthy
23 rd	Stephanie Henry
30 th	TBD

Children's Worship <i>(2nd, 3rd & 4th Sundays only)</i>	
9 th	Betty Miller
16 th	Janet Schmidt
23 rd	Kim Schulte