



For unto us a Child is Born

ISAIAH 9:6

Christmas 2017

**“But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see
I am bringing you good news of great joy”**

My dear friends in Christ,

As I sit here preparing worship and looking toward the coming weeks as Christmas makes its peaceful but accelerated approach, I find myself being drawn back to this passage of our Christmas story from Luke’s gospel that we read last week in the Advent Conspiracy group. These are of course the very first words the shepherds heard at the very first celebration of Christ’s birth, and I find it interesting for myself that the phrase which speaks to me the most in the passage above is the instruction to not be afraid. For the shepherds who had to be terrified at the sight of the glory of God, fear for their lives might have been on their minds to be sure. But for us, those who have accepted the wonderful news in the message of the angels for years or maybe even decades, “do not be afraid” has to maybe mean something different. After all, we can hardly be afraid of the good news anymore can we?

Unfortunately though, for many people, Christmas brings with it a new sense of something to be afraid of in our modern society and expectations of this joyous season. The anxiety of wondering if you’ve bought just the right gift or the terror of thinking that you’ve forgotten something for the great feast you will enjoy can be distressing and overwhelming for us in a world that tells us that the “things” or the “stuff” of life are the most important part of our Christmas celebrations. How can we not live in fear of mistakes or memory lapses as we approach this season with all of its expectations?

However, even in the midst of this chaos and fear that our world spins us into, we need to listen to the voices of the angels – the ones who brought calm that very first Christmas. A calm that was possible because God was inviting the shepherds into a relationship with Him in such an intimate and incredible way. This can still happen for us today just as it did for the shepherds – that gift of calm brought about by God’s desire to be in a cherished relationship with each one of us. That calm can be ours if we remember that great gift from God. The gift of calm that draws us into a deeper relationship with God, more than any gift-wrapped Christmas present can bring.

I look forward to sharing the challenge of finding a place without fear with you all as we approach Christmas this coming year (our first one together). Whether it will be in the words of your favourite Christmas carol or whether you will hear the promise of God’s peace in the words of the great news of Christ’s birth, I hope God’s peace will find you and that *Christmas* will find you ready to “be not afraid” and find you at rest in the promise of what this great covenant brings.

From Charlotte, Aaron and myself, may you find peace this Christmas, without fear and ready to accept again the relationship that God longs to have with us all. Blessings to you all as we fear not, but instead proclaim the great news of Christ’s redemptive birth.

Merry Christmas to you and your loved ones.

St. Augustine Anglican Church

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