

“You Can Share God’s Love With The World”

Psalm 147:12-20

Ephesians 1:13-14

John 1:1-18

This is the Second Sunday of Christmas. We have gathered to lift up the hope, peace, joy, and love of God that we have received in our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ. Each one of us can share God’s hope, peace, joy and LOVE with someone, somewhere today. The world’s citizens can change in mind, attitude and character, one person at a time, in and through that LOVING interaction with you and other followers of Jesus.

Jesus gives you voice to make a difference in the world one person at a time.

Listen to this account of a 20th century Orthodox priest:

Two months before [Orthodox priest] Aleksandr Menn was felled by an ax, he was asked in a radio interview broadcast across Russia, “Does one need to be a Christian, and if one does, then why?” “I think there is only one answer, and it as follows,” he said:

“Man always seeks God. The normal state of man is, to some extent, to be connected with a higher power, even when the higher power in the human mind is distorted, and turned into something secular. Eras of Stalinism ... and all other isms seek some false god even if God is taken away. This turns to idol worship, but still the inner instinct of seeking God is there. ...

“The question is totally different when it is put this way: Why Christianity? Is it because of the sacred scriptures? No, every religion has sacred scriptures, and sometimes with a very high quality of spiritual content. ...

“Then why Christianity? Morality? Certainly. I am happy that in our society the high moral values of Christianity are accepted, but it would be totally erroneous to maintain that there are no moral values outside Christianity. ...

“Then why Christianity? Should we embrace ... a position that God is revealed and therefore can be found in any religion? No, because then the uniqueness and

absolute character of Christianity will disappear. I think that nothing will prove the uniqueness of Christianity except one thing--Jesus Christ Himself.”¹

Your identity is in Jesus. He loves you like no other. Jesus lives his life in and through everyone who claims him as their Savior and Lord. In this regard, Bobby Schuller, the pastor of Shepherd’s Grove Presbyterian Church in Irvine wrote *Creed of the Beloved*: “I’m not what I do. I’m not what I have. I’m not what people say about me. I am the beloved of God. It’s who I am. No one can take it from me. I don’t have to worry. I don’t have to hurry. *I can trust my friend Jesus and share his love with the world.*”² You can trust Jesus to give you voice, in word and deed, to share God’s unconditional love with those you encounter every day.

Psalm 147:12-20, Ephesians 1:13-14 and John 1:1-18 declare that we can praise God even in the midst of hardship, because God is always acting in the world.

Psalm 147:12-20 proclaims that we are to pay attention to God’s powerful voice through God’s words and actions in and through the faithful. Psalm 147:12a, 13, 18a, 19a and 20c reads, “Praise the LORD.... For he strengthens.... he blesses.... He sends out his word.... He declares his word.... Praise the Lord.”

Ephesians 1:13-14 calls us to be inclusive of all with an assertive embrace and welcome of everyone’s brokenness/marginalization. Ephesians 1:13 reads, “In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit.”

¹As found on preachingtoday.com. Written by Larry Woiwode in *Books & Culture*, Vol. 2, no. 2. Larry is an elder at the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Carson, South Dakota.

²Bobby Schuller, *You Are Beloved* (Nashville, Tennessee: Nelson Books, 2018), 16.

John 1:1-18 reinforces that the world's default perspective and position is darkness. Jesus, however, is the light. He brought light into darkness. The Word was made flesh. God's creative, transforming and reconciling words and actions were brought into physical proximity to humanity and its default perspective and position of darkness. This proximity is an ongoing crucible. We are beloved children of the Light in the midst of the world's darkness. As followers of the Word who was made flesh we can embody grace and live it, in word and deed, in our personal relationships, churches and communities. And yes, with "the other." John 1:5 reads, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it."³

On this Second Sunday of Christmas you have been given voice to speak and do as Jesus did. Again, Bobby Schuller writes, "You are full of energy and life. Let it come out...God takes pleasure in you and wants you to take pleasure in the gift of life. You are so loved. Everyone is looking for love..."⁴ Use your voice, in word and deed, to share the transformative light of God's love. Live the good news of your salvation. Claim your belovedness. Love God. Love others. Show others their belovedness. Be Christmas people every day. Amen.

This sermon was preached (Livestream due to the Coronavirus) on Sunday, 3 January 2021, The Second Sunday of Advent, by the Rev. Dr. Steven M. Marsh in his Study at Geneva Presbyterian Church in Laguna Woods, California

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³In the four paragraphs of textual analysis above, I have benefited from the thinking of Marissa Galvan-Valle, Emerson B. Powery, Katie Owen Aumann, Warren Carter and Julie Peebles in Joel B. Green, Thomas G. Long, Luke A. Powery, Cynthia L. Rigby and Carolyn J. Sharp, editors, *Connections, Year B, Volume 1* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2020), 139-141, 142-144, 144-146, 147-149, 149-151.

⁴Bobby Schuller, *You Are Beloved*, 175.