



It's The Holiday Season

You may remember the part of Andy Williams song Happy Holidays that this note is named after. So what makes up your holiday season? It becomes a little disconcerting to me why the stores have Christmas out before Halloween is over and how commercial this time of year has become. It seems we bypass the true meaning of Christmas to get to those presents under the tree.

In doing so many people miss the beautiful story of Christ's birth. We miss advent and the anticipation and preparation for this event. What a magical time that must have been when God sent his only son to earth! It is for us to remember, marvel and convey the age old story of Joseph and Mary's journey, the stable filled with animals, shepherds, whom the angels extolled to spread the word of his birth, and the Wise Men who followed the star that led them to Jerusalem and Christ's humble entry into the world. That humbleness was Jesus's trademark for his entire life.

So it's the holiday season let us shine a light on the great gift God gave to us with the birth of Christ not on the commercialization of Christmas.

Celebrating and Giving

We had a wonderful time at the Fall Festival on October 7. There were about 45 in attendance, and we appreciate all the volunteers and donations we had to make for a great evening!

The *community garden* is cleaned up for the season, we just need to plow the Garden area. We harvested over 500 lbs of produce which was donated to the Canton Calvary Chapel and the Total Living Center. A special thank you to Sandy, Susan, Ann, and Charlene for all of their help.

We continued the tradition of collecting food items to help a family in need during *Thanksgiving*. We chose two families, both of which have children, to assist this year.

December 3 through the 17 we will have a "*Mitten Tree*" that will be for the Domestic Violence Project in Canton and Louisville Community Cupboard. We are asking the congregation to bring in children and adults sized gloves, hats, scarves to decorate the tree with or contact team member for list of other items needed. We look forward assisting this wonderful organization this Christmas season.

A special thank you to those who supported the Louisville CARES walk. Center's contribution was \$660 and the total walk \$3,482 (4 churches and 2 individuals).

We will also begin the *Advent Offering* envelopes in December which goes to the Church of the Brethren Congregational Life Ministries.

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Visit us on the web at
www.center-cob.org
Or Facebook

Calendar

Sunday Worship 9:30 am
Sunday Studies 10:45 am

Pastor's Bible Study
Wednesdays, 6:30 pm
Church Library

Choir Rehearsal
Thursdays, 7:00 pm



You are invited to a Christmas Music Celebration

Sunday, Dec. 17, 7:00 pm

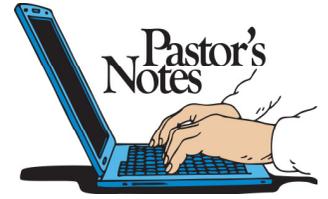
Center Church of the Brethren

"Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." (Luke 2:11, 12)

Merry CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY New Year

Brothers, Sisters, Family,

"Hear the word of the Lord, O nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, 'He who scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd does his flock.' For the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of one stronger than he."
Jeremiah 31:10-11



Seasons of life can be hard on us. This time of year we look forward to celebrations, Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's but many of these seasons bring back hard memories and create a tension in our lives. They bring back the memories of lost loved ones, broken relationships that have not yet been mended and can remind us that, in a time when many are happy, we are overcome by hard times and these complex emotions. We struggle emotionally, physically, spiritually and the world around often doesn't have much hope for us beyond the temporary distractions of these seasons, entertainment, parties, busyness. So where do we find lasting hope? What carries us through, whether we find ourselves in the midst of a real struggle or seem to be going along well?

The verses above are quoted from Jeremiah. Jeremiah was a prophet called by God in hard times. He preached the truth but his was a hard and often unwelcome message. For that reason Jeremiah felt ostracized, separated, hated. He was physically abused, verbally rebuked by the leaders, prophets and people of his day, threatened, imprisoned, thrown in a pit. Throughout the book of Jeremiah you hear his faithful struggle, at times almost wondering "Really God?" and crying out things that sound more like "I really just can't do this anymore" more than "Here am I, send me." The people of Israel and Judah were facing hard times as well. For them it was largely of their own making. They'd turned from God to all manner of evil, worshipping false gods, involved in wicked and lewd practices, even sacrificing their own children in the fire! God was going to send them into exile for it, send them into Babylon. That was, in part, Jeremiah's message and understandably few wanted to hear it. Meanwhile, the other prophets told the people to be happy, preaching a message saying "Peace! Peace!" The people liked that message but had little reason to believe it. Sounds like our world.

Well, like many things we hear in life, that's not the whole story. It's in the midst of all this that God was working. The truth is, there is no season God doesn't work to his glory and our good. God made a promise through Jeremiah, though hard times had come and life wasn't all that it seemed it should be, that He was working out His redemptive purposes. In the midst of Babylon they would flourish, if they stayed faithful (Jer 29). At the end of that season of life God was set to bring them back, *"For I will turn their mourning to joy, will comfort them and make them rejoice rather than sorrow"* (Jer 31:13) and *"Refrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears; for your work shall be rewarded, says the Lord, and they shall come back from the land of the enemy. There is hope in your future says the Lord,"* (Jer 31:16-17). The end of Jeremiah and the Israelites story during this season was the story of the book of Daniel, a people exiled, the story of a faithful man, his friends and 70 hard years. Ultimately the book of Ezra and Nehemiah tell us how all those promises came to pass and how God brought the people back through an amazing series of events.

So what about our season? What about this season? God, 2,600 yrs ago, made a promise through Jeremiah, God would send a King to save His people (Jer 23:5-6). Just over 2,000 yrs ago God made the down payment on that promise, He sent his Son, Jesus as a child into this world. He himself lived a hard season of life (Isaiah 53:3) but through His life, death and resurrection we see hope being affirmed. All things do work together for good, even the hardest calls, the hardest seasons. The promise of the Holiday season is that, in the midst of pain, amidst of the seasons of life there is greater hope. God has and is working His plans still. Your hard season will end and, in fact, all the hard seasons of life will end, when Jesus Christ comes again to set all things right. We endure because God keeps His promises. It's our call to remain faithful. Christ has come, the promise has been made, fulfilled and is only yet to meet it's final fulfillment. Will you believe it?

In Love,
Pastor Mark



Celebrating Christ's Birthday
Monday, December 25
Center Church ~ 10:00 am