

Another Word December 22, 2020

To our family and friends of First Christian Church

Through these four weeks of Advent, we hope you have felt the presence of God and the anticipation of His rich promises to come.

All the Christmas cards have been delivered as well as the gift bags. Starting the first week of January, we will switch back to thinking of you cards and letters of encouragement for our friends and neighbors in our local nursing homes.

This years' Christmas Eve service will be filled with scripture, prayers, and many of your favorite carols. Tune in on our website, firstchristianashland.org, or find us on YouTube.

This will be my last letter this year because Brian and I have been "kicked out" for the next 2 weeks, "for a long winters nap." Linda and Ellie will be writing *Another Word* and keeping things running smoothly. (Thanks for the break) Please note, there will not be an interruption of our online services in our absence. (They have already been recorded)

May we pray...O Holy and mighty creator; we look into each new day filled with hope because there are so many things to thank you for. Family, friends, the beauty of our world, and the opportunities we have to serve you. Even in the stress of life, you are there guiding and comforting us, granting us peace. As we prepare to celebrate the birth of our savior, we lift our hearts to you. Hear our prayers and grant our brothers and sisters around the world your Peace. In Jesus' most precious name we pray, Amen

"Dear father in heaven, I'm not a praying man, but if you are up there, and you can hear me, show me the way. I'm at the end of my rope." These are the words George Bailey prayed in the classic film *It's a Wonderful Life*. Donita and I recently watched the movie again for the

umpteenth time. (Relax, we love the movie) Then, the very next day, I read a bit of trivia about Jimmy Stewart and that scene. The script did not call for tears, but as he prayed, Stewart said he “felt the loneliness, the hopelessness of people who had nowhere to turn.” The tears flowed and his heart was broken as he felt the hopelessness of others.

Have you felt it? Do you sometimes feel there is no hope left; for yourself, for others, the world? Well, you are not alone. Look at David, in Psalm 109. He cries out to God saying, His “heart is wounded”, he is “thin and gaunt, fading like a shadow”, that he is “broken”, and cries out, “Help me, Lord my God!” The prophet Isaiah finds himself in the throne room of God and cries out, “Woe to me! I am ruined, for I am a man of unclean lips.” Isaiah 6:5. That’s hopelessness.

Then there is George Fredric Handel, the famous composer of *The Messiah*. Written in 1741, it was debuted in Dublin in 1743 to, at best, mixed reviews. Having already had other recent failures, it seemed his success as a composer was at an end. Again, hopelessness.

I’m sure you are thinking, “ok Rich, how are you going to make sense of all this?” For the last week, I’ve been asking myself the same thing. But God placed all these seemingly unrelated people, events, and a song on my heart to make a point. And the point is; there is no such thing as hopelessness, when you have God in your life! And that God uses our darkest, deepest, and most fearful moments of our lives to help us, to guide us, to teach us to trust, and to rely on Him.

David was broken, so that he would see God, to see what was in store for his life, and experience God’s love for him, “The apple of His eye.” Also, God revealed to him that a king from his lineage would one day sit on his throne.

Isaiah knew he was a sinner, (unclean lips) but God cleansed him because He was to become one of the greatest prophets in history. To be used to reveal God’s message of hope for the world.

So, what about Handel you ask? After the failure in 1743, he languished around London until 1750. A friend of his heard of a benefit that was to be held to raise money for a hospital for newborn and unwanted children. To reveal the plight of the children and attract potential donors, Handel was asked to perform appropriate music. Handel chose *The Messiah*. Just so you know, music had never been used in this way before. Well, the music was well received, funding was secured, and *The Messiah* went on to be one of the best known and loved musical pieces of all time. And the hospital was still going strong when it was incorporated into a newer hospital in 1958, two centuries later.

So what ties four unrelated people, a promise, a scripture, a song, and a prayer together? Bear with me a few moments longer.

Isaiah 7:13-14, “Hear now you house of David! The Lord Himself will give you a sign.” This is the promise of things to come given to by God.

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7. “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.” “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from this time on and forever.” This scripture, given to Isaiah 350 years after David, spells out the promise of who, how, and when.

The song? *For Unto us a Child is Born*. The above scripture was used by Handel in *The Messiah*. Imagine, God’s word of hope and promise being sung to the world for over 2 centuries and counting.

A promise by God, 3,000 years ago, recorded by a prophet in exile 2,700 years ago, and placed to music 250 years ago, is used to speak to a man, sitting in a bar, all alone, with a life he thought had no hope. He cries out to the Promise maker, who sends an angel to remind him that in

God, there is always hope, if you look for it. For without hope, there can be no joy, no faith, no love.

Our lives are filled with many ups and downs. And sometimes, the “downs” can stretch us to our limits. But like George Bailey, all we need to do is cry out in prayer. And know, that our loving and caring God gives us hope, because, “For unto us a child is born.”

Merry Christmas,

Rich