

Sermon: Reclaiming Christ for Christmas

By Rev. Stephany Graham - Peekskill Presbyterian Church

Isaiah 42:1-8

Psalm 146: 5-9

Luke 4: 18 -21

Maybe if we introduced those who have not yet come to know him as the Jesus who taught us to love our neighbors, all of them, gay, bi-, black, straight, immigrant, undocumented, conservative, liberal, young, strong independent women, and old white men. No exceptions!

If we would allow him to grow beyond the Sunday school pages of our lives and be born again and again anew within us, grown up and mature, eager to serve and not just to be served, than maybe he becomes relevant today.

But I also wonder if Jesus became more relevant in our society today, how far those of us who are yesterday Christians would be willing to follow him?

Yes, we need Jesus today, but the real Jesus, not a fictitious character. You know we love fantasy and illusions in this country, and in the church, but there is an urgent need for hope and healing, we need the Jesus who confronted corrupt religious systems, and helped people become their highest spiritual selves.

We need a Jesus whose way of life was sacrificial love, a Jesus who faced his fears and lived by faith. My God, my God, the world needs Jesus today as much if not more than when he first stepped into his anointing.

The night that Jesus was born was a holy night, but not the story book holy that has kept us in la la land. At the time of Christ's birth, Rome had ruled the world for half a century.

The tragedy of war was all around; men, women, and children who did not successfully hide would have been killed, raped and enslaved. Those who survived would have lost everything.

The republic had turned into a tyranny, with the emperor in charge of the empire. It was dark under Roman rule, the religious system was corrupt. Herod was a schemer who took advantage of roman political unrest to claw his way to the top.

It was into this world that God came, a dangerous occurrence for those who feared losing power and privilege.

There was no room for Jesus; for this cataclysmic shift in world events.

But thanks be to God, it is precisely when there is no room for him, that we must make his way known.

Jesus came to break tribal boundaries, Jesus came to break down prejudices and stereotypes, Jesus came as a human portrait of the love of God.