

# WISHING EVERYONE

## Identifying with God

It's time to go deep. I love hot chocolate, Hershey Kisses and Christmas music as much as anyone else, but there is a danger this time of year in getting so caught up in the happy holidays that it is easy to overlook the deeper purpose of this time of year. That deeper purpose is identification with Jesus Christ.

That identification came in what is referred to as the incarnation. This is the event in which God became human. The authors of the Bible appreciated just how difficult this is to understand. It is further complicated by that fact that the history of ideas had already mixed notions of human/god hybrids in Greek and Roman mythology. Even Caesar Augustus referred to himself as son of god. How could people possibly grasp such confusing and muddy concept?

The answer is as simple as it is complex. Primarily, it had to be this way. God becoming human was the only way people could be made whole and reach God. All of our attempts to go to God are a dismal failure. We need him to come to us, which is exactly what he did. Imagine the same being who made the mighty Columbia River, who is infinitely all powerful and all knowing, the same one who fashioned together the complexities of the human body or the perfect smile of a toddler decided to inhabit one of these human bodies knowing its limitations and frailties. Only love could explain such devotion.

The Apostle John described this event as the Word became flesh and took up residence among

us. That Word is the power that created the universe in the beginning. It was not another god, like in mythology born out of the wedding of gods and humans, it is the God. This One John speaks of is the One and Only Son from the Father. There is no other like him. There are no other gods. This is the one true God who is trying to reach you and me this Christmas with the good news that he has made a way for us to finally be at peace. This peace has come because he came to us in a lowly manger 2,000 years ago.

Of course, all this must be believed in order for it to be effective and change your life here on earth and for eternity. That belief comes by faith. We all live by faith whether we would like to admit it or not. We really have little to no control over what the people around us do or what circumstances we face. We choose to believe that things will work out. We trust that our children will eat their vegetables. We believe that the people around us have our best interest at heart and will act accordingly. We all live by faith.

The real question we must ponder is, what am I really putting my faith in? This Christmas and beyond am I trusting that it will all just work out or am I trusting in this magnificent wagger that God has placed on the table? Will you accept his offer this Christmas? Could you by faith believe that God has come to you in the person, Jesus Christ?

*Pastor Tripp Finch  
Willow Creek Baptist Church*

## Christmas Messages

### The reason for the season

For many of us, Christmas is one of the busiest times of the year, and for some it can begin losing its joyful celebration of life and change into a time of physical and financial stress. Responsibilities related to parties, gifts, baking and decorating can drive one nuts. Perhaps as crazy as doing everything possible to celebrate the birthday of someone you don't know all that well or at all...

The truth is Christmas can be most enjoyed by those who have an active relationship with Jesus Christ, know the story of His birth and life and death and resurrection, and fully understand what it means to humanity and their own lives.

They understand why the night of His birth was different from all the other nights throughout history; why a small town in Israel was briefly the most blessed place on earth; why the birth of a child changed everything; why angels sang to simple shepherds and wise men made a difficult journey to a faraway land.

Understanding is everything when it comes to Christmas.

If you've never stopped to consider the reason for the Christmas season, or perhaps you know but have just lost touch with it, please know that the "why" is what brings Christmas to life.

God comes to us in this busy Christmas season to make all things new. Where we are too busy, God brings peace; where we are lost, salvation; where we are sad, joy; where we are bitter, God gives us courage to love again.

### Area churches to hold services

Hopeful Saints Ministry, a Lutheran and Episcopal partnership, will celebrate the birth of Jesus with a festive service of lessons, carols, communion and candle lighting on December 24 beginning at 7 p.m. at the Episcopal building located at the corner of Church and Gale in Heppner. Everyone is welcome, including kids of all ages.

Willow Creek Baptist Church, 560 Minor Street in Heppner will hold a special Christmas Eve service on Tuesday, December 24 at

DEADLINE:  
MONDAYS  
AT 5PM

## Celebrate the light

In these darkest days of the year, light is a precious commodity—not just because daylight is short, but also because we lack the ability to cast much light into our surroundings at a time when common ground has become so elusive, careful listening to opposing views has become so rare and an end to violence and homelessness and hunger seem so far beyond reach.

And yet, in the middle of this dark season, we can still celebrate the light. Why? Because long ago God sent his son to interrupt the world as we'd been running it . . . a world God created as good and orderly, but we defiled with selfishness and carelessness. The infant we celebrate at Christmas grew up to be the conqueror of darkness and

death. The birth of Jesus, and the ministry, death, and resurrection that followed it, cast a light that can never be extinguished, no matter how much we continue to make a mess of things.

How can we find the light we need in this beautiful but broken world? How can we find hope? By dropping to our knees and recognizing that light and hope are all wrapped up in a manger that holds the king of peace, the light of the world.

"Whoever follows me," Jesus said, "will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (John 8:12b)

*Rev. Katy Anderson  
Hopeful Saints Ministry  
a Lutheran-Episcopal Partnership*

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5 p.m. This will be a brief candlelight service filled with singing, joy, Scripture readings and even live harp music. There is no better way to kick-off the holiday celebration. You don't want to miss it. There will also be regularly scheduled services on Sunday, December 22 and 29 beginning at 10 a.m. All are welcome.

*Season's Greetings*

Holiday Design by Addalyn Pointon of Lewiston, ID.

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