

Sermon

December 30 and 31, 2006

Luke 2:41-52

2006 is almost over.

2007 is about to begin.

Isn't that amazing.

How can it be that another year is almost over?

And now we stand

at the beginning of a new year.

If you're like me,

you wonder what 2007 will bring.

What will be the joys?

What will be the sorrows?

What will happen in the year to come?

We don't know.

Maybe it's best that God doesn't give us the opportunity to know.

Maybe it would become a burden.

We don't know what the next year will bring.

But to say we don't know the future,

is not to say that we know nothing of the future.

There are some things we know

And the most important thing we know

is that God is with us.

And God will be with us

each day of the year ahead.

That's the good news for 2007.

Just like it was the good news for 2006.

Britain's King George

shared these words with his people
at the beginning of World War II:
**“I said to the man at the gate of the year,
‘Give me a light
that I may go forth into the unknown.’
And the man replied,
‘Put your hand into the hand of God.
That shall be to you better than a light,
safer than a known way.’”**

We don't know the future.
But we know who holds the future in his hands.

There is also a prayer
on page 153 in the front of the green hymnal.
Would you turn to that page.
It's the middle prayer on the top of the page.
What you read and pray it with me.

**Lord God,
you have called your servants
to ventures of which we cannot see the ending,
by paths as yet untrodden,
through perils unknown.
Give us faith to go out with good courage,
not knowing where we go,
but only that your hand is leading us
and your love supporting us;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

That's the way we look into 2007.
We don't know what the year will bring.
But we know that God is with us,
God's love supporting us.

It's been a week now since
we were together to celebrate Christmas.

We're still in the Christmas season.
And we continue to celebrate the good news
of Immanuel—
—God with us.
God is with us.
Today.
Tomorrow.
Always.

And as God is with us
in this year ahead,
how shall we live our lives?
How shall we follow?

Our Gospel reading from Luke
is the only Biblical account of events from when Jesus was a boy.

Mary and Joseph
went to Jerusalem each year for the Passover.
But the year Jesus was 12,
something unusual happened.

Relatives walked together
from Nazareth to Jerusalem.
Averaging 15 miles a day,
the journey would have taken 4 or 5 days.

Everything went fine
until the trip home.
After a day's journey,
Mary and Joseph discovered that Jesus wasn't with them.
They figured he was with the relatives.
But he wasn't.

When they were sure he wasn't with the group,
they headed back to Jerusalem.
3 days later they found him.
3 days!

He was sitting in the temple,
sitting among the teachers,
listening to them,

asking them questions.

And his mother said to Jesus,

“Child, why have you treated us like this?
Look your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.”

He said to them,

“Why were you searching for me?
Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”

But they didn’t understand.

Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth,
and was obedient to them.

Why do you suppose Luke tells this story of Jesus?

One story from his youth,
and this is the one.

Why?

Why tell the one where Jesus gets in trouble with his parents?
Where we all can understand their “great anxiety”?
Where he seems like a disobedient child?

Why this story?

Perhaps it focuses

on Jesus response to his parents
when they found him.

Did you not know

that I must be in my Father’s house?

Which can also be translated,

Did you not know
that I must be about my father’s work,
or interests,
or activity?

What was most important to Jesus?

To do what God was calling him to do.

I’m probably not telling you anything new

when I tell you that the Bible isn’t always clear.

It can be really confusing.

I think this is really confusing.

I don't think it's a good idea for a 12-year old to wander off.

I don't think it's a good idea to make your parents search for 3 days.

Bad idea.

But to do what God is calling you to do—

—good idea.

I wonder if this episode

is foreshadowing for us.

Giving us a hint of what is to come.

When we hear that Jesus went back to Nazareth with Mary and Joseph

and was obedient to them,

I wonder if he realized that,

although he was doing the right thing,

it wasn't yet the right time.

And I wonder if it was foreshadowing

that, when it was the right time,

the path that God had for Jesus

wouldn't be one that Mary and Joseph would have chosen.

What parent

would want their child to die on the cross,

labeled a criminal,

suffering pain and rejection and death.

What parent

would want that?

And yet,

this story reminded them

and reminds us,

that the critical thing in life

is not to do what is most comfortable

or easiest.
The critical thing in life
is to be about our heavenly Father's interests.
To do what God calls you to do—
—wherever that might lead.

I want to be comfortable.
We all want to be comfortable.
But as a Christian,
that's not the bottom line.
It is more crucial to follow.
To follow where Jesus leads the way.

And Jesus leads us to lives of love,
because of the good news of God's love,
which comes to us this Christmas season.
To follow Jesus
is to love the Lord your God
with all your heart and strength and mind,
and love your neighbor as yourself.

It's as simple
and as complicated as love.

God showed God's love for us,
in that, while we are yet sinners,
God came to earth as a baby,
lived and died and rose again for you and for me.

This baby Jesus
is love sent to us.
Jesus is Immanuel—
—God with us.

We're focusing on music today,
as we often do the weekend after Christmas.
I'd like to introduce you to a song that's new to me.
The melody is familiar.
The words I know are:

“Bring a Torch, Jeanette Isabella”.

Different words,
same tune.

Listen.

Love has come—a light in the darkness!.....

Love comes to you this Christmas season.

God’s love goes with you into the new year.

Keep your eyes turned to the Heavenly Father’s house and interests.

And know,

whatever the year might bring,

God is always with you,

God’s love supporting you.

In Jesus’ name,
Amen

Love Has Come

Love has come—a light in the darkness!
Love shines forth in the Bethlehem skies.

See, all heaven has come to proclaim it;
hear how their song of joy arises:
Love! Love! Born unto you, a Savior!
Love! Love! Glory to God on high.

Love is born! Come share in the wonder.
Love is God now asleep in the hay.
See the glow in the eyes of his mother;
what is the name her heart is saying?
Love! Love! Love is the name she whispers:
Love! Love! Jesus, Immanuel.

Love has come and never will leave us!
Love is life everlasting and free.
Love is Jesus within and among us.
Love is the peace our hearts are seeking.
Love! Love! Love is the gift of Christmas.
Love! Love! Praise to you, God on high!

Text: Ken Bible

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