

Christmas Message
December 24, 2021
A Sermon by Rev. Frances Savill

What does the Feast of Christmas mean to you?
I sat down before Christmas and thought about that.
What does the Feast of Christmas mean to me?

Over these last four weeks, we have been lighting the Advent candles – the candle of hope, the candle of peace, the candle of joy and the candle of love.

And in our Advent study we've been spending time thinking about our hope, our peace, our joy and God's love.

And I've come to realize that the Feast of Christmas means hope, peace, joy and love – that are found in the Messiah whose birth we celebrate tonight.

Let me try to explain:

Christian hope is not just wishful thinking, and it doesn't depend on circumstances. Christian hope is in a person – Jesus, the Messiah. Long ago God promised that he would send the Messiah, Jesus, to bring light and life, and hope and restoration to our world. Tonight we celebrate the faithfulness of God- God keeps His promises.

And in Jesus life, death and resurrection we see that God brings life out of death, that God's love for us has no bounds, and so we hope. We hope in God's love. We hope in God's goodness. We see God's love and God's goodness when we see Jesus.

This night, this feast we celebrate, reminds me that Jesus is the source of my hope. Jesus is also the one who brings Shalom to people's lives. Shalom is a big word. Peace – our English word means to me, an absence of conflict. But "Shalom" means wholeness and well-being.

Jesus came to bring Shalom, He is called the Prince of Shalom, the angels message was "Shalom – peace, well-being, wholeness to the earth and goodwill to all people." Jesus brought healing, restoring what was broken, forgiving and saving.

He was born in a manger. The shepherds were the first to hear the good news. No one is too humble, too broken, too lowly, too messed up, too poor, too rich too far gone, for Jesus to bring healing, and new life to.

Christmas reminds me that Jesus brings Peace, well being, fixing what is broken in my life, in my relationships, in our world. He is our Peace with God, and with each other.

Jesus is also the source of our joy. Paul, the apostle, who wrote many books of the Bible, taught that we should REJOICE ALWAYS!
This was also Paul who spent a lot of time being beaten and thrown into dungeons for his faith.

How can he say; REJOICE ALWAYS! Our joy doesn't depend on our circumstances. It's closely related to our hope that rests in Jesus. Since we have HOPE we can rejoice – even while we are waiting for our hope to be fulfilled.

So we rejoice even when a pandemic surges again, and life is difficult and discouraging, and frustrating, and even while we don't know when this will end, we know God's love for the world.
We know God's faithfulness, because we see Jesus.
And so we sing songs of joy from prison cells, and in isolation.

The joy of the Lord is our strength.
Our joy continues past Christmas, and boxing day, and the day after, and even after the visa bill comes in and the tree goes down, and whatever happens happens, because our JOY is founded in Jesus who was born for us.

Finally, Christmas assures me most clearly of the love of God for me, for us, for our world. God entered our world, Emmanuel, God with us, was born in a stable, to a peasant girl, showing us that life has meaning and beauty and wonder.

This feast of Christmas makes clear that God hasn't given up on us, won't give up on us, loves us with a love beyond our understanding.

God so loved the world, God so wanted us to have shalom – well-being, restoration, healing, salvation, that Jesus, God in flesh came and was born one with us.

Christmas reminds me of the source of all hope is Jesus.

Christmas reminds me that peace, true peace, Shalom, well-being, all the pieces of life fitting together as they were meant to be, comes from Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

Christmas reminds me that JOY unshakeable joy that is greater than the circumstances around us, is found in Jesus.

And Christmas reminds me that LOVE, unending, agape love, the love God has for us, that never gives up, that endures all things, that is stronger than death, is seen this night as God enters our world in the flesh.

HOPE, SHALOM- PEACE, JOY and LOVE these are the gifts of God given to us and the meaning of Christmas night.

Thanks be to God