

## **“Making Christmas”**

**By Rev. Frances Savill**

**December 22, 2024 | Fourth Advent**

**Readings:**

**Luke 1:36-55**

How many of you have come here this morning a little or a lot weary?

How many of you are ready for Christmas?

Some of you have learned to start earlier or fuss less, and are relaxed this morning.

However you've come, whether it's tired and stressed or relaxed and at peace, it is good to be here together in worship this day as we prepare for the birth of Jesus.

With Christmas just days away, I wanted to share a quote I found.

Kathleen Norris wrote how some people come to worship on Christmas Eve, listen to her description:

“What a mess we have made of God’s greatest gift to us!

We scurry for weeks, baking, shopping, working extra hours, rehearsing and presenting Christmas pageants. Then, on the eve of the Nativity, we

force our frantic, over-stimulated children into their “best”, most uncomfortable clothes, and we all rush off to church to collapse into a pew. After that, it’s playing Santa, and confronting those maddening “some assembly required” directions until the wee hours.”

Tonight we are invited to celebrate our salvation story, and all of creation is invited to dance, sing, and feast. But we are so exhausted. “

So how do we get ourselves in shape for Christmas?

The sense that something is not entirely as it should be in our lives, may mean that we are in fact, in very good shape for Christmas.

It is precisely because we are weary, and poor in spirit, or sense that something is not right, that God can touch us with hope.

This is not an easy truth.

It means we let go of commercial images, and the greeting card rhymes, put Martha Stewart and Oprah back on the shelf, and admit that we cannot make Christmas.

We can make the perfect meals, find the most wonderful presents, but we haven't made peace on earth, there is not joy all over the world. The world we have made is full of darkness.

So today we are invited to watch for the light of Christ.

We watch for the love of God to enter our world and our lives, through the child born in the manger – God with us.

This is how it was the first Christmas.

In all our Christmas pageants, and our readings of the Christmas story, it is God who is the main actor.

There are a host of important characters, to be sure.

God couldn't or wouldn't have done it alone.

But God is the prime mover, the initiator, the first to act.

The other characters respond to what God was doing.

First of all, this whole idea was God's.

God determined before the dawn of creation that Jesus should come and live amongst us, and be born for us.

God sent the messenger to Mary to see if she would agree to bear the Messiah.

God's Spirit came upon Mary and God sent the messengers to tell the shepherds.

God made the star in the sky shine to light the way for the wisemen.

God is the first mover of all things.

God brought the first Christmas to a land and time of great suffering and cruelty on earth.

God entered our world in the person of Jesus, the child born in the manger.

God brings Christmas.

And with the birth of this holy child, hope is born, a light floods the darkness of our hearts, our lives, our world.

God is with us.

What wondrous news – a light that our darkness cannot extinguish; a light from God.

It's a light we don't have to make or work for, and there's no assembly required.

The light of God's love is the first Christmas gift given to you today, and each day.

It is yours to accept and unpack for a life time.

Words from a Christmas poem say:

Brought up in a world where there's no free lunch  
And trained to use presents for barter, I'm  
spending

The rest of my life receiving this gift with no  
Strings attached, but not doing too well.

(Eugene Peterson)

Receive God's gift of Christmas –

A child born in a manger, who is Christ the Lord.

God born in the flesh, come to save us,

Come to show us his love.

Take the rest of your life to receive it and unpack it.

But maybe today before you leave you might say  
“thank you” for it

And join with the angel chorus, with Mary and with all those who have lifted up their praises to God.

Thanks and praise be to God.