

From the Pastor's Desk:
A Sermon for Sunday, December 25, 2022 - Christmas Day

Okay, I literally just preached this passage like 15 hours ago. I'm fairly brilliant – and since it's Christmas Day, you have to smile and nod in agreement with that statement – but even I can't come up with more Good News from this passage. What I can do is encourage you to watch for the little things today. That's what the shepherds are told to do, right? They get this HUGE message – the Savior, the Messiah, He is here! – but what sign of this do they have? A small baby, wrapped tight in swaddling clothes.

You know, this is a season where every commercial has tried to convince you that love is found in the “big gift.” You remember the “big gift” from childhood, right? It was the gift that came out last, the one left by Santa, almost certainly not under the tree, but brought out from hiding after you'd opened all your other presents and were on the edge of disappointment. Its size could be relative, but it was the one you had been hoping for and yearning after for days, weeks, even months. A Sega Genesis on Christmas 1996... with Madden 95 included? Yes please! That's the sort of “big gift” mentality this season breeds in us. Well, at least its commercials.

These commercials teach us to look out for the big gift – the new truck, shiny silver, red bow on its expansive hood, pummeling its way through the snow with a puppy in the passenger seat. Or the diamond-studded heart, hung on a gold necklace, draped across her prominent collarbones as a fire crackles in the background. I even saw one commercial – maybe it was for Home Depot because they're how Doers Get More Done, I guess? – that advertised a new kitchen as a Christmas gift. Like, what? “Merry Christmas, honey! We're going to cook on a hot plate and toaster oven in the dining room for the next six weeks. I looooooove yooooouuuu!”

But let's throw out the big gift mentality. Let's look for the real blessings in the small packages. Let's take in the little moments of laughter, or of quiet contentment, or even of the just-right frosting on that cookie. Let's learn to store these things up and treasure them in our hearts. If you're particularly adventurous spiritually this day, you can even look for the blessings in the midst of

doing the dishes after tonight's Christmas feast. (I'm preaching to Brianne right now. Do you think she can tell? No? Welp, gave it my best!). Joking aside, though, Brother Lawrence, who was a 17th century French friar, wrote about doing the dishes as one of the ways he experienced the presence of God. You can check it out for yourself in his book *The Practice of the Presence of God*. (And I can see some spouses already beginning their partner's Christmas gifts for next year!).

Let's practice what it would be like to be those shepherds, though we're likely to have to do it without the aid to our attention that is angelic visitation. Or, alternatively, if you *are* visited by an angel, just make sure it isn't because you used extra-rummy egg nog to chase your bourbon soaked fruitcake. “That's not an angel, dad. That's the dog. He's just wearing some festive antlers. That isn't a halo.”

And since I promised a short sermon – and because this is my seventh sermon in, like, 24 days – let's wrap things up and try our hand at capturing the little blessings in life that we'll treasure in our hearts. Let's find the good, pure, small, simple joys in coming to this Table and then singing together. Let's let this communion and our collective voices do the rest of the preaching today.

Amen and amen.