

“WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO: FOR THE GLORY OF GOD” (12/27/09)

SCRIPTURES: Colossians 3: 12-17 & Luke 2: 22-40

KEY CONCEPTS/IDEAS: Dedicated lives honor God & reflect the markings of our Savior, Jesus the Christ.

OPENING THOUGHTS:

So...how was your Advent & Christmas? Did you make any lasting memories? Did you experience the arrival of Jesus the Christ this Advent/Christmas? Were there any quiet moments of reflection OR any hectic, rowdy moments where Jesus arrived for you? I pray so.

On this my last Sunday for a short while, I hope that I leave you—for my educational sabbatical—renewed & ready to face a new calendar year. I hope you are excited about the possibilities of 2010!

- ***If 2009 was a great year for you***, I hope the momentum continues & you continue to create a positive & productive year in 2010!
- ***If 2009 was not that great of a year for you***, as a New Year dawns...you have the opportunity to create something better!
- And regardless of how 2009 turned out...as we begin a New Year... (which is actually one month into the NEW church year—which begins with Advent)...***my deepest prayer is that you will choose to make 2010 a year that you live with God’s plan & purpose at the forefront of your mind—as you make decisions, as you relate to people, as you seek employment (or continue in your current job), as you plan your budgets.***

CHURCH APPLICATION:

THOSE ELECTED & CHOSEN: We have just installed our new Administrative Council (***Tim, Kelley, C.J. & Benjamin***). We have just reaffirmed our Lay Ministers (***Patty, Regina, John, Chris & Tony***). And we have just installed/dedicated our sabbatical pastor (***April Alford***). These 10 people—these 10 leaders of Our Hope MCC—have just publicly made their commitments to “serve God by serving you” in 2010. They have verbally committed & made a covenant with themselves & God, with themselves & each other AND with themselves & you—to serve God to the best of their abilities.

WHO WE ARE/WHO GOD IS: Each of them is an ordinary person AND yet each of them serves an extraordinary God! And together—as a team, as a council & as selected leaders of this faith community—they will each do extraordinary things! I ask that you join me in daily prayer that each person will inhabit their full potential in this New Year!

WHO YOU ARE/WHO YOU CAN BE: AND, you too, are leaders in this faith community! In 2010, I pray that you’ll make a decision to offer your giftedness & abilities back to God right here at Our Hope MCC & in the Athens community!

READING FROM COLOSSIANS 3: 12-17:

The reading from the book of Colossians is a wonderful reminder of who we all are in Christ! This passage charges & challenges ALL followers of Christ to adopt certain virtues of a new life in Christ.

Specifically, we are called to develop a proper attitude toward ourselves; have a genuine concern for others; graciously forgive & love sacrificially. How well we adopt these virtues

Will determine how harmonious & unified our faith community will be—here at Our Hope

MCC—and in the larger universal Church. Developing these virtues that were all modeled by Christ will also allow us to properly worship & experience God.

READING FROM LUKE 2: 22-40:

And speaking of worshipping & experiencing the presence of God....

In today's reading from the Gospel of Luke, we catch a glimpse of 2 people who totally lived for the glory of God: Simeon & Anna. This reading is precious! The poor Holy Family is committed to fulfilling Jewish law by purifying Mary & circumcising & dedicating the Baby Jesus.

Now honestly, if we had been Mary or Joseph—some of us would have fairly danced to the Temple proclaiming we'd just birthed the "Baby Born of God"! ☺ Yes...that speak boldly part works for some of us; the live humbly part...not so much!

While quietly bringing Jesus to Temple...2 older people who were deeply in tune & guided by God's Spirit recognized the Child & praised God. Simeon blessed the Child & His mother. Likewise, a female prophet, Anna, came & praised God—blessing the Child & proclaiming His identity to all who were looking for God's redemption! I love Anna! She's my kind of woman! ☺

CLOSING:

Epistle Reading: In closing, those who follow the words of ***Colossians, chapter 3, verses 12-17*** will honor & glorify God in their attitudes & actions.

Gospel Reading: The wise prophets—***Simeon & Anna***—knew who Jesus was because they spent their lives honoring God! And they are remembered in Scripture in relation to their prophetic words & blessings of the Baby Jesus.

Living Epistles/Lights of the World: Finally, with each passing year (& don't years seem to pass more quickly the older we get), we can make an eternal impact in lives all around—***IF*** we just choose to! Will you?

As followers of Christ—into this New Year—we are the living epistles, the living word of God made flesh in the 21st century! Jesus Christ grew up & called us to follow Him—the Light of the World—our lives are needed in this often dark, oppressive world!

I don't have to tell you how dark & unfair this world can be! People of God are people of light! Their hearts, souls & every day interactions bring light into the world. People of God, People of Light add positive value to the lives of those they encounter....it is the way of Christ!

And that is your pastor's prayer for you in this New Year:

***As followers of the Light of the World, may we carry that light deep in our hearts,
May we commit to keep this light lit each day of 2010,
May we gather together to renew & encourage this flame of truth,
May we seek the warmth of this faith community,
May we fan our flame & the flames of each other—as we grow in community,
And may we carry the light of Christ in our hearts until we are all together again!***

Merry Christmas, Church! Happy Kwanzaa! And Happy New Year, 2010! I love you!