

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

SUNDAY DECEMBER 8, 2019

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

"In the Presence of the Present"

Based on Isaiah 9:2-7

If you do not want to miss out, you must pay attention to that other world, the unreasonable inexplicable world saturated with God's holiness, that is in the long run more decisive and more satisfying than the available world offers.

~Walter Bruggemann (27)

A long time member of Knox, Peggy Pitman, found her path to the angels of the 'realms of glory' this past Wednesday afternoon. Moments later, I arrived at her door in Gateby.

"How did you know?" her son asked.

"I didn't," I replied.

But in my mind I whispered, "There is One who did, and carefully carved out the activities of my day in such a way, that I would arrive just when He wished me to do so." This is not the first time this strange sequence of events has happened to me in my ministry.

And so I found myself sitting quietly in the **presence** of He who understands all, **present** in the moment, as family reminisced of Peggy's life, her strength and tenacity as a

single parent in the days before that was fashionable or acceptable, her many years of contented retirement, her solid believe in Christ; registering that Peggy had received the greatest **present** of all: eternal glory.

Walking in the **presence** of the **present**, ready to receive the greatest **present**.

THE PEOPLE
WALKING IN
DARKNESS
HAVE SEEN
A GREAT
LIGHT;
ON THOSE
LIVING IN
THE LAND
OF DEEP
DARKNESS
A LIGHT
HAS
DAWNED.

~ISAIAH :9-2

It's a clever sentence and a witty use of grammar. But perhaps this not the right day for wit, or to be particularly clever.

We are not melancholy today, but thoughtful and reflective. We pause for a moment from the hustle and bustle, from gingerbread houses and shortbread cookies to remember what was:

- those who have come into our midst and have gone;
- for hands that no longer carve turkey;
- for traditions and activities that have their day and been let go.

It seems odd in this time of "Sleigh Bells Ring, are you Listening?" and "It's Beginning to Look a lot Like Christmas!" that some sadness can creep into our thoughts and the odd tear is shed. Is God **present** in these moments too?

Isaiah spoke to a people discouraged by the wait, cynical that there was nothing to wait for anymore, and questioning, that after all this time, was YHWH worth waiting for? Life had not been easy:

- There had been exile.
- There had been war.
- There had been death of loved ones.
- There had been destruction of crops, barns and temples.

- They were tired of waiting for YHWH to restore their land, reclaim their trust and return their good fortune.

But Isaiah reminded those who would listen:

That with darkness: comes light.

That with sadness: comes quiet joy.

That with death: comes eternal victory.

“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.” (v2)

“Are you sure?” the people asked.

And Isaiah replied,

“The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.” (v7).

“In good times and in bad.”

Isaiah said,

“In moments of sadness and glimpses of glory

In difficult moments and

spectacular successes

In the every day and every day

God is **present.**”

And with His **presence**, we are afforded the opportunity to receive many gifts, many **presents** if you will:

- A smile or a giggle
- A good book in the warm sunshine
- A cup of tea with friends
- A holy moment with a grandchild
- An opportunity to share a familiar story...

...of a woman and a man, who found themselves in unexpected circumstances; having to let go of a life that would never be; with some fear, but in trust, stepping forward into the future; clinging tightly to the **presence** of God, to guide them to Bethlehem and beyond, as they carried the most precious **present** the world has ever seen.

Be **present**, to the **Presence**.

Wait for the **present**.

Amen.

~This Advent series is based on the book “Celebrating Abundance” by Walter Bruggemann, a series being followed by Bible Study groups in the PCC all across Canada. Copies of the book are available at the Church Office for purchase.