



December 31, 2019

## **New Beginnings**

*"...to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord."* **Luke 2:11**

As we move into a new year, a new decade, we are moving from a season in which we celebrated the wonderful news of Jesus' birth. The Messiah has arrived! However, he turns out to be a radically different savior from the person many were expecting. People were hoping for a great warrior-king who would rebuild the Temple, liberate Israel from its Roman oppressors, and usher in a new Jewish kingdom. Instead, Jesus makes God's kingdom available to all nations, keeps company with outsiders and misfits, loves his enemies, and faces execution on a cross. Jesus' death could have signaled that he was not the Messiah, but fortunately that was not the end of Jesus' story.

Jesus' life begins in a manger, but it does not end on the cross. A Messiah who is killed and who remains dead could never claim to be God's Anointed One. On the third day after Jesus' death, God raises Jesus from the grave, vindicating the messianic claims of his earlier ministry. Today, his risen and ascended presence fills the universe and continues to be freely available to every human being.

A breeze of a great freedom blows into our lives when we acknowledge this. We can give up "playing God," stop trying to fix ourselves, and put an end to our futile attempts to control those around us. We also can let go of our expectations that earthly leaders will bring us salvation. While they may certainly make changes in our society—for better or for worse—politics alone cannot bring about a world that fully satisfies the eternal longings of the human heart for peace, joy, and freedom.

This does not mean that we should sit back and do nothing. Because the Messiah has come, we are invited to trust him. Through his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus decisively conquers the powers of sin and death. His Spirit alone can change the human heart and show us the way to create a full and flourishing life. His values of self-sacrifice, loving his neighbor, and generous hospitality are essential. His community followers consists of flawed and fallible people who are learning to love God and neighbor, learning to overcome evil with good, and learning to care for our world.

And we are invited to become part of it. So how do we join his community? Simply by responding to Jesus' gospel invitation to "Follow me." Discipleship is not primarily about getting our doctrine right, about the decisions we make, or about having a regular quiet time. Rather, it is about keeping company with Jesus each day, getting to know him,

listening to him, learning to embody his values, and being in the presence of those whose company he seeks as well. And hopefully, our life together will cause others to say, "The Messiah has truly come!"

**Practice:** Bonhoeffer reminds us, "the kingdom is to be in the midst of your enemies." As the new year begins, pursue interaction with others committed to following Jesus in the midst of the mess and muddle of the world.

Note: This devotional was written by Trevor Hudson. Trevor is a dear friend who has a collection of devotionals for Advent titled, **Pauses for Advent: Words of Wonder**

---

JEFF WHITEBREAD | *Capitol Commission, Statehouse Pastor*  
E: jeff.whitebread@capitolcom.org P: 484.680.4260

