



December 27, 2020

GOOD NEWS FOR ALL PEOPLE

Rev. Dr. Craig Lindsey

By way of beginning this evening, I would ask you to do the MOST Counter-Cultural thing possible! Please keep your masks on, keep your distance from one another, place both feet on the floor and sit up straight, HOWEVER Would you take a deep breath, and let it out. Take a Deep Breath and release. Just Breathe. More than any time in our memory, this has been a time, when All the World has been terrified, everyone filled with anxiety, afraid even to Breathe. Russia and China, Eastern and Western Europe, the Mid-East, Africa and the Americas, everyone has been afraid. Rich and poor have been afraid. Afraid of an EVIL invisible force,... that can infect without symptoms,... killing young and older,... destroying lifetimes of dedicated hard work,... making families afraid of what we have done to one another.

As we imagine Christmas, it is SMELLS & TASTES, EVERYONE GATHERING IN GOOD CHEER, the SOUNDS of SINGING; What this Virus does is to rob us of Smell and Taste, of Gathering Together, of Singing, of Kissing Beneath Mistletoe, of Grandmas and Grandpas and Hugs! AND The Angel of the Heavenly Host said to them: BE NOT AFRAID! I BRING YOU GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY THAT WILL BE FOR ALL PEOPLE: CHRIST THE SAVIOR IS BORN!

Perhaps you are like me, for all my life, I imagined those words were said only to the Shepherds keeping watch over their flocks at night. But now this evening, I see this is the Heavenly Response to EVERYTHING that has taken place: Emperor Caesar Augustus (of the Empire of Rome before the Church) decreed that ALL the World needed to abandon the safety and security of their homes and businesses, friends, neighbors and communities, TO OBEY, going wherever you were told, so as to be COUNTED, in order to be TAXED. AND everyone was forced out of their homes and business, to do as we were told. Among everyone Joseph and Mary, great with child, also had to leave home and business to ABANDON it all. HOWEVER, BE NOT AFRAID: CHRIST THE SAVIOR IS BORN!

Coming to be one among you here in Green Valley, I have come to recognize that no one I have met actually CLAIMS TO BE FROM Green Valley, everyone claims to be from somewhere "other". Imagine the chaos and confusion, if on top of everything else this year, we each by order of the Government, were told to go back where you came from? Backward. Not even to where we lived for the last 20 years, or where we lived before that, not back to wear we first started out, not back to our colleges or even where we grew up, but go backward to the place where your ancestral family came from. While I have never been there before, this for me would mean our traveling to the City of Ennis in County Claire, Ireland or

to a Limesy Manor somewhere in Scotland. So the Christmas story begins, not with WHO ARE YOU, or WHERE ARE YOU FROM, but in GOING BACKWARD to a place and time and people before your knowing. Going Backward to before we ever had knowledge, we hear BE NOT AFRAID!

Our Government has described that we are now headed into a “Dark Winter.” That is an evocative phrase, conjuring images of endless cold and dark and death, a lack of hope an absence of light! Similar to something from the HBO Series Game of Thrones where humanity fought a war for survival against death. But in this Dark Winter, the very real statistic is that this pandemic was already spiking after Labor Day, then people again travelled to their family homes to join together for Thanksgiving, then compounded by a Second Influenza virus, and possible mutations across England and Europe. “Operation Dark Winter” was originally the name of a Wargame that took place in June of 2001 during George W. Bush’s Presidency prior even to the events of 9/11. “Operation Dark Winter” was a National Security Council preparedness-exercise that took place over 3 meetings at Johns Hopkins University surrounding a fictional circumstance of a Small Pox attack. The conclusion of that exercise was that our Leadership knew almost 20 years ago, our world was completely unprepared for a pandemic like this to happen, and did not work together.

HOWEVER, rather than a Fictional Preparedness Scenario, or a Study and Report that go on a shelf, this has been revealed as our Real Life. It is in this dark night, this Dark Winter, that we hear the heavenly angels say to us BREATHE, BREATHE DEEPLY, BE NOT AFRAID, I BRING YOU GOOD NEWS OF A GREAT JOY THAT WILL BE FOR ALL PEOPLE. There is a Biblical Truth, we continually ignore... CREATION’s future ALWAYS begins in the dark of the night before. As described in Genesis, there was EVENING and THERE WAS MORNING, God separated the light from the darkness: One day; THERE WAS EVENING & MORNING, a Second day; and a third and forth, ALWAYS beginning in the dark night before the dawn. But different from a Preparedness Scenario; different from simply believing that someday in the next several months we will be vaccinated for this reality to go away; the Bible offers a new and different Truth: I BRING YOU GOOD NEWS FOR ALL PEOPLE that the Light of God’s love pierces the darkness and the darkness could not overcome it. CHRIST PIERCES ALL OUR FEARS BY TRUSTING GOD. We each need to be vaccinated, but we also need to believe God loves you and we need to trust.

Something amazing happens to us in the dark. Initially we stumble about lost and we are increasingly afraid both because we do not have a clue where we are going, and we are uncertain what to trust, what is secure and safe. BUT When light comes into the darkness, our vision acclimates and common ordinary things become what we rely upon. Not only to recognize the Light itself, but with the light to recognize the MOST Ordinary of things: a Step, a Chair, a Table, AND as directed by the Angels “You will find a baby, wrapped in swaddling blankets”, not in a palace or nursery, or even a crib, but laying in a feed trough in a barn. As witnesses we adjust to the light, and we more than see, we “recognize purpose and meaning”, that this Baby in so common a state is the Savior of Human-kind, and of our humanity. Not as the Savior of the Caesars, not the Savior of Governments, not the Savior of Some, or Us, but not them, INSTEAD Good News of Great Joy that will be for ALL People: CHRIST THE SAVIOR IS BORN!

Seeing this innocent baby, we recognize in him: OUR Savior,
HIS LIFE is more than a balance for all the sins of the world,
he is not only our Rabbi and Teacher,
he is our Priest and our Sacrifice;
he is our Champion;
He is Lord of Lords;
He is King of Kings;
He is Light of Lights;
He is the Counselor God Listens to;
He is Pioneer and Perfectioner of Faith,
He is our brother,
He is everyone's Other,
He is a Stranger,
He is our Troubler,
He is our Neighbor,
He is our true friend,
He is the fulfillment of all the Law and the Prophets.

The painful truth of Christmas is not whether "Mary knew?" Mary was told to BELIEVE by the Angel at the Annunciation. The question is whether we RECOGNIZE, BELIEVE and TRUST?

This Christmas another miracle has happened. For at least the LAST 20 Years, No One Knew What to DO; HOWEVER, All the Scientific Process of Micro-Biology discovering a Vaccine, Testing the Safety and Efficacy, to be able to CURE a pandemic Virus (the worst that has afflicted humanity in a Century) which routinely has taken years, was ALL completed within 8 months! The Legislative Review Process of our Government which for any ordinary BILL usually takes months or YEARS to be adopted, and may never receive full support of all Parties, was completed in days. After ¾ of the year in hopelessness and fear of breathing in every Nation around the world, everyone worked together. A Vaccine has been discovered and approved and mass produced for all the world to be cured.

Would that we could all cooperate to resolve International Starvation and Malnutrition, Poverty, Child Abuse... The Good News for all the World is that Christ is in the world! We can sacrifice our power and control to work to provide for the least among us if we only BELIEVE WE CAN and WE TRUST.

PEACE, BE STILL & BREATHE! I BRING YOU GOOD NEWS OF A GREAT JOY THAT COMES FOR ALL PEOPLE:
CHRIST THE SAVIOR IS BORN!