

Christmastide 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus, our Lord,

Another year almost done and a new one about to begin. It is wintertime again and we find ourselves in the midst of the holiday season. Even in this skeptical and narcissistic society in which we live, for those who are willing to look beyond themselves and for those who see in life value and happiness, not rooted in the possession of things, stuff, and people, there is still magic and wonder to be found in this time of the year. The brisk clean, frosty air warms the blood, makes our cheeks and noses red, sharpens the senses and makes a warm blanket, hot cocoa and hot cider seem so much better! Even a snow fall can turn the gray and bleak landscape into something beautiful to see and enchanting to walk and play in. The lights, trees, and decorations of Christmas add color and charm to our streets, neighborhoods and homes. Christmas songs and carols bring a festive spirit to homes, workplaces, even stores and malls. And, the many Nativity scenes remind us of the true meaning of this season of the year... Emmanuel, God is with us!

Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, dwelling among us, the Savior and redeemer of the world to whom one day every knee shall bend, every head shall bow, and whom every tongue shall call Lord, did not come among us as a conquering hero, a mighty leader of armies and nations, or as a clever, dissembling politician or promoter of social causes. He came to us as a baby. Helpless, crying, small, and hungry. But also cute, lovable, giggling, bright eyed and full of the awe and wonder of life. A baby grabs at your heart strings and inspires you to want to hold him or her, to play little games with him or her, to shelter him or her and keep them safe, happy, healthy. The infant inspires all this through no great power of his or her own... it is accomplished simply through the mere presence of the baby! Thus it is with Christ. He did not come to conquer the world through the force of arms or deeds of celestial power. He did not come to change society through clever words and skillful manipulation and political maneuvering. Jesus did not even come to be the champion of causes and crusades. So he came among us as a baby....to change grab the human heart! The way of Jesus changes the world, yes, but does it one heart, one soul at a time. He does this not through great displays of power, but like an infant, simply through his mere presence.

Emmanuel, God is with us even in 2018 and will be with us in 2019. But as with a baby, you and I will need to reach out to embrace him and let him touch our hearts if we are to experience his power to change us and lead in his way. And, when we reach out to embrace him, we will discover a great wonder... Jesus has been holding us in his arms and his heart all this time.

Blessings of peace, hope, love, and joy to you and your loved ones!

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year,

Rev. Phil+