



Betwixt and Between

From Christmas to New Year

From the First Chapter of the Gospel John

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; with him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

Living in the Transition

Read the story of Simeon and Anna in Luke 2

Reflect on the elucidation given by John, the beloved (see above).

Note that the synoptic (seeing together) gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, all present the signs and sayings of Jesus. John, however, focuses on the identity of Christ. John's is the more introspective view of Jesus, the Son.

Between Christmas and New Year: What do you celebrate? What do you leave behind? How do you go on? Do you reflect on memories that remind of you difficult times more than joyful ones? Do you gather with family and friends with a joyful attitude or with anger because "things aren't what they used to be." Or, do you choose to look ahead with positive anticipation making realistic and attainable goals the New Year's Resolutions you know to be possible and worthwhile?

Paul to the Philippians

In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

And this is my prayer; that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far...

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.

Stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you.

(The above are from a variety of verses found in Paul's Letter to the Philippians).

Keeping Christmas = Keeping Christ

The essence of the Christian life looks like this

Hope everlasting life beginning now
 Love for God and neighbors as well as self
 Joy of salvation and a renewed spirit
 Peace that passes all understanding

As followers of Christ, we have the challenge of keeping life balanced; the balance of letting go and holding on.

Letting Go and Holding On - a responsive litany

Leader: This is a time of endings and beginnings.

Group: A time of reflection and resolution, of choice and change.

Leader: This is a time to let go—

Group: To let go of all that has bound our hearts and held us back.

Pause for a brief time of silence considering something you are ready to let go of, committing to leaving it in God's hands.

Leader: This is a time to hold on —

Group: To take hold of the blessings of the past, of our dreams and best intentions.

Pause for brief time of silence considering something to hold onto, believing God will help you hold on while encouraging you to grow in expanding the internal and external signs of your faith.

Leader: Let go of your worry. Do not dwell on that which you cannot change. Tomorrow has trouble enough of its own. Rejoice in the gifts of each day and every moment.

Group: We will let go.

Leader: Let go of cynicism and despair. Do not lose hope. Open your eyes and hearts to the needs of others. Do justice. Seek peace. Befriend the stranger. Believe God wants it to be on earth as it is in heaven.

Group: We will let go.

Leader: Hold on to the goodness within you, your sacred worth. Hold on to all that brings you joy, the love in your life, deep and edifying friendships, fond memories, experiences of beauty and feelings of wonder.

Group: We will hold on.

Leader: Hold on to the calling of God in your lives with an awareness that, in Christ, you were made for more and for service with high purposes.

Group: We will hold on.

Leader: In this time of endings and beginnings, the betwixt and the between of life, of reflection and resolution, of choice and change,

All: May God give us the grace to let go and the strength to hold on as well as the wisdom of discernment so greatly needed. To this, we yield what we are and not just what is temporarily ours.

In Closing

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.

Stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel.

Keep the Christ of Christmas with you...in hope, love, joy and peace.