

Christmas Eve '19 A – Luke 2:1-20 – Christmas Playlist: A Song of Joy

I've reached that point in life where I really like Christmas Eve. I haven't always been able to say that...but *RIGHT NOW* for me all the hoopla & noise our world creates around this season seems to fade wonderfully into the background. I love it. I get to tonight & I feel like I'm sitting over a beer with one of my old friends...I'm sure you've got one of those sorts of friends.

Known each other what seems like forever...maybe you have...And you might not see them often...months goes by but then you're there & time evaporates & it's like a minute hasn't been missed. You just pick up where you left off...There's trust...respect...a knowing...you don't waste time with the old stories because right now you need to catch up on kids/grandkids – retirement/job changes – cancer/divorce/deaths What's there is forged in the battles & tempered by the scars...you don't bother with excuses or explanations or evasions you just know so you're honest...you're fine to be quiet & sip your beer or coffee & wait until they can speak again after the lump in their throat passes. You have nothing to prove...nothing to lose...because in that moment you know they know...that "thing" was your fault...that "win" that no one else cared about was big for you...they know the betrayals & the struggles & the stuff you're afraid to admit anywhere else...so you do...and it's good.

That's how I feel...That for me is where I find myself Christmas Eve...In that place that is more real more genuine & more true to life more connected at a deeper level than all the "deep connections" I hear about on those fake-reality TV shows...

Christmas Eve for me is real/true because that's what it is meant to be for all of us This moment...this night...is connects you & me...each one of us to the greatest promise of all time...*Even before he made the world, God loved us & chose us in Christ to be holy & without fault in his eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, & it gave him great pleasure.* – Eph 1:4-5 NLT

God in Jesus comes into this world into our lives...to join us in all that we are & all that we do for the sole unique purpose of re-connecting us with God...to bring us into the Father's presence...to take hold of each of us like a long lost friend...to embrace us like a loved one long gone now brought home. Hear it this way...*Since God's children are made of flesh & blood, it's logical that the Saviour took on flesh & blood in order to rescue them by his death. By embracing death, taking it into himself, he destroyed the Devil's hold on death & freed all who cower through life, scared to death of death.* – Heb 2:14-15 MSG

And tonight...as that happens...in that baby in that manger...the heavens break out in song...*"For to you this day is born a Saviour: Jesus Christ the Lord"* For you...this song this song of immense joy is for you. What a striking contrast...the song we hear in our world & the song we hear tonight.

For too many of us the song of our lives is some rehashed refrain that emerges from frustration or boredom w/ our lives or a long ago chorus of hurt feelings & bruised egos or a re-mix of memories & thoughts that have a life of their own on constant repeat...But tonight...*God was pleased to have all of himself live in Christ Jesus God was also pleased to bring everything on earth & in heaven back to himself through Christ He did this by making peace through Christ's blood sacrificed on the cross.* – Col 1:19-20 GW

Tonight...the Father is pleased/delighted through His Son to rewrite our sad despairing melodies into a vibrant new song. Tonight...we sit with the One who reconciles us to the Father...makes us God's friends & rewrites all the wounded lyrics & broken chords of our lives into a song of joy that reverberates: *"Glory to God in the highest & peace to his people on earth."* On this night...God joins our human chorus from the inside, as one of us, from birth to death & the song he sings is one of love...hope...restoration & reconciliation. God sings one tune "I love you"...irrevocably unceasingly unwaveringly...God sings one tune "I love you"...w/ a hint of judgment, anger, disappointment or threat of punishment... God sings one tune "I love you"

Tonight...I invite you to let that baby be your old friend...You have nothing to prove & nothing to lose. He knows the betrayals & the struggles & the stuff you're afraid to admit anywhere else...Tonight you need no excuses or explanations or evasions Tonight...all you need is that child...that gift of God's love...that gift/song of joy.

Joy is not in the lights or the food or the travel or the circumstances we manufacture in our gatherings. Joy – GREAT JOY for all people is that child...Jesus. Joy in Him is the deep abiding confidence in the final triumph of God's love over everything else. And that great triumph...just makes you want to sing...*"good news...great joy for everyone"*

Lord Jesus thanks that you alone welcome us into God's presence wrapped in the strength of your love & power of your saving grace. Fill us tonight to overflowing with your joy that in that moment of delight we experience the unmatched abundant life you have in store for all people forever. Bless our homes with your love & our lives with your goodness. Make this Christmas the one we remember forever as the one where you transformed everything about us for your glory. We pray this in your name...Amen

