“Living in the Moment”

Luke 2:1-20
(“Living in the Moment” – Part V of VI)

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7:30 p.m. service

From the Pulpit
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A Christmas Meditation written and delivered by The Rev. Dr. Timothy C. Ahrens, Sr. Minister, First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Columbus, Ohio, Christmas Eve, 7:30 p.m., December 24, 2016, dedicated to all the children of earth born in 2016, that we may make for them a better world in which to grow-up and always to the glory of God!

“Living in the Moment”

Luke 2:1-20

(Part V of VI in the series, “Living in the Moment”)  

Let us pray: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of each one of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our salvation. Amen.

Johnny Jones had a bad year. It was not just a “bad” year. It was a terrible, not so good, despicable, really (really) bad year. It was made bad by all of Johnny’s bad decisions and bad behaviors. He was unkind to his baby brother. He didn’t listen to his teachers – he bit one and hit another. He never followed directions from his soccer coach or his parents – all year. He never cleaned his room. He treated his neighbor’s pets (and his own hamster) in ways that cannot be spoken of on Christmas Eve. His attitude was bad. His behavior was bad. The whole year was a really bad year.
So, when Johnny sat down to write his Christmas letter to Santa, it was hard to put words together. He started, “Dear Santa, I have been really nice this year. I would like the Sky Viper v2400 HD Streaming Drone with FPV Headset. Merry Christmas, Johnny Jones.” He looked at it and said, ”I haven’t been really nice” – tore it up and started over.

“Dear Santa, I had had a tough year, but I promise to do better next year…” (tore it up and threw it away!)

“Dear Santa, no matter how bad I have been, I deserve….” (tore it up and threw it away).

Fearing that he would get coal in his stocking and nothing else, Johnny put down his pencil and looked around. Up on the mantle of the fireplace was the Holy Family in the Crèche - a manger scene with Joseph, Mary and baby Jesus. Johnny smiled a devilish smile. He dragged a chair from the kitchen, climbed up and took baby Jesus from manger. Holding Baby Jesus in one hand, he began to write, “Dear God, if you ever want to see your son again, you will give me the Sky Viper v2400 HD Streaming Drone with FPV Headset. Signed, Johnny Jones.”
Holding baby Jesus in his fist, Johnny headed to the mailbox with his letter to God. With this, his terrible, not so good, really bad year just got worse just in time for Christmas.

We all know that it is not a good choice to hold Jesus hostage. He cannot be detained or stopped by terrorists of any size or age, in any nation, at any time. He will come again and reawaken the spirit of Christmas joy in each of us. He cannot be stopped. He can only be welcomed with love.

Here it is – Christmas Eve once again. All the letters have been sent. The gifts have been purchased and all we are waiting for is the return of Jesus to the manger of Bethlehem.

We know that there are those – like Johnny Jones - who have missed the reason for the season – again. They have gotten wrapped up in buying and selling; trading and marketing and meeting quotas. They have worked extra hours to make other people happy and find themselves unhappy, sad and alone this Christmas Eve.

But, we also know, in the midst of all this, there are those who open our eyes to see the beauty of this season. Their eyes shine with joy and delight. Their voices quiver and resonate with the songs of the season. Their hands are open for giving and giving
and giving again. In them we see the reason for the season. We see the angels of the season as they break through the atmosphere on this silent night. We need to experience their joy and delight as they bring light and love to life for us. We need to pay attention — once again — to their presence in our world. They are the ones living in the moment. They are the ones who shine the light of the Bethlehem star in our lives.

In a moment, we will receive the gift of the nativity through the drama of the nativity presented by our teens. Let us sit back and soak it in. If we are not yet ready for Christmas to come, let us receive this gift — Christmas is ready for us.

Oh, by the way, Johnny Jones received a package in the mail on Christmas eve. The return address said, “God.” When Johnny opened it, hoping to find the Sky Viper v2400 HD Streaming Drone with FPV Headset inside, he was surprised by what he found instead. There were a Bible and a note.

The note read - “Dear Johnny, Thank you for your letter. I know you had a terrible, not so good, despicable, really (really) bad year. I forgive you and love you — nevertheless. I ask only two things of you this Christmas. First, please put my son back in the manger. Terrorism and hostage taking is wrong and always against my will. You know that. Second, please read this
book I sent. It will help you in the new year to turn your life around. It will help you have a wonderful, very good, honorable, really (really) good year. I promise. Your friend, God.”

So, Johnny put down letter. Looked at the baby Jesus. Got a chair from the kitchen, took it over to the mantle, climbed up and placed baby Jesus back in the manger. Then he climbed down, sat down, opened the Bible, and started to read, “In the beginning, God created…. ”

May the God of creation, the God and parent of our Savior Jesus Christ, grant you love and blessings for Christmas and the turning of a new year. May the new year be a wonderful, very good, honorable, really (really) good year. Amen.

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