

Greetings this glorious new morning in Jesus' name,

SCRIPTURE:

John 1:12 (MSG) – Larger reading: John 1:1-18

“But whoever did want him, who believed he was who he claimed and would do what he said, He made to be their true selves, their child-of-God selves.”

STORY: by C. S. Lewis

There is a stage in a child's life at which it cannot separate the religious from the merely festal character of Christmas or Easter. I have been told of a very small and very devout boy who was heard murmuring to himself on Easter morning a poem of his own composition which began 'Chocolate eggs and Jesus risen.' This seems to me, for his age, both admirable poetry and admirable piety. But of course the time will soon come when such a child can no longer effortlessly and spontaneously enjoy that unity. He will become able to distinguish the spiritual from the ritual and festal aspect of Easter; chocolate eggs will no longer seem sacramental. And once he has distinguished he must put one or the other first. If he puts the spiritual first he can still taste something of Easter in the chocolate eggs; if he puts the eggs first they will soon be no more than any other sweetmeat. They will have taken on an independent, and therefore a soon withering, life.

OBSERVATION:

There is something about Christmas that brings out the child in all of us. Some of us are embarrassed by that reality and I'm not really sure why. If we were really honest with ourselves we would have to admit that we wish we could still believe in Santa Claus. We lay awake at not trying to imagine just how it would be possible for Mr. Claus to be a reality for this world of ours. Oh, that it would be true.

But alas, reality hits home, we lower our head and say, “That stinks!” And yet there is hope. Read again the words from Dr. Lewis. We can still hold onto Santa Claus and the wonder of Christmas as well as the Easter Bunny and those marvelous chocolate eggs ... it is just a matter of priorities. Jesus just has to come first and take up the lion's share of our festivities.

Jesus coming first? Really? Oh, there are those who say with enthusiasm and much fanfare, “Jesus is the reason for the season” or declare “Keep Christ in Christmas,” but then turn their back on the poor and needy. They look first to the color of the skin of the person. They degrade someone who speaks with a foreign accent. They work to send all the illegal's home ... regardless of their contribution to our society. They speak ill of those who do not happen to of their faith. But they want to keep Christ in Christmas.

A child accepts people at face value. They make friends easily with everyone. They see nothing wrong with hugging an individual who happens to be black or Hispanic or Muslim. Everybody is important to them ... if we will allow them to act on their belief.

God wants us all to be his children, but to be child of God means that everyone is our brother and sister ... and I mean everyone. And then as a child-of-God we can truly celebrate Christmas and even Santa Claus and flying reindeer and elves making toys and a magical place called The North Pole ... and Grace and Mercy and Forgiveness and Prayer and the great Kingdom of God.

QUOTE:

“We need to give each other the space to grow, to be ourselves, to exercise our diversity. We need to give each other space so that we may both give and receive such beautiful things as ideas, [openness](#), dignity, joy, healing, and inclusion.”— Max de Pree

PRAYER:

Help us to move beyond our limited vision of your Kingdom to a large understand that includes people of all races and nationalities and even beliefs.

And the faith journey continues, Pastor Jim
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***Join us on Sunday in the sanctuary at 10:30 for worship
OR on FaceBook – Manatee United Methodist Church
OR on YouTube – No Facebook account needed
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