

- Good morning to all God's Saints at Manatee Life,

SCRIPTURE:

Psalm 73:28 (CEB) – Larger reading: Psalm 73:1-18

But me? It's good for me to be near God. I have taken my refuge in you, my Lord God, so I can talk all about your works!

STORY:

An atheist went into a schoolroom and wrote on the blackboard: "God is nowhere." A little girl rose from her seat and said: "Oh, sir, that's wrong. It should be 'God is now here.'"

REFLECTION:

I'm a sucker for anything that starts out with a little boy or girl. Evidently all of my friends know this because they sure pass on a bunch of stories and I enjoy them all. I'm also knowledgeable enough to realize that most of the words placed on the lips of the children were really written by adults, but that doesn't bother me.

The Christmas message is that in the babe of Bethlehem, God had entered our world with real flesh and presence. He was now here! But since his death and resurrection and because of the power of the Holy Spirit God is now everywhere – even if we fail to acknowledge him or not.

Elizabeth was a member at the Hudson church. She had one little statement that anchored her in her faith and she took every opportunity to share it. Elizabeth would share, "If God seems further away, who moved?"

AIN'T – author unknown

He was just a little boy,
On a week's first day.
Wandering home from Bible school,
And dawdling on the way.

He scuffed his shoes into the grass;
He even found a caterpillar.
He found a fluffy milkweed pod
And blew out all the 'filler.'

A bird's nest in a tree overhead,
So wisely placed up so high.
Was just another wonder,
That caught his eager eye.

A neighbor watched his zigzag course,
And hailed him from the lawn;
Asked him where he'd been that day
And what was going on.

'I've been to Bible School,'
He said and turned a piece of sod.
He picked up a wiggly worm replying,
'I've learned a lot about God.'

'M'm, very fine way,' the neighbor said,
'for a boy to spend his time.'
'If you'll tell me where God is,
I'll give you a brand new dime.'

Quick as a flash the answer came!
Nor were his accents faint.
'I'll give you a dollar, Mister,
If you can tell me where God ain't.'

The little girl and this little boy had discovered something that is often lost on us adults ... the unacknowledged presence of God. We so wrapped up in our life ... its challenges ... its heartaches ... its fears and trials ... its ups and downs. Why? Because the emphasis is squarely placed on us and what we are facing. Our focus is so narrow that we, though very much aware of the truth that God is now here, have lost sight of that reality. Advent should bring us back to that reality so the JOY of Christmas can lift our spirit and place a song upon our hearts.

QUOTE: "Security is not the absence of danger, but the presence of God, no matter what the danger." ~ source unknown

PRAYER:

Dear God, creator, redeemer, sustainer ... help us to be sensitive to your presence. In the name of the one who brought you near, Jesus Christ himself. Amen

And the faith journey continues, Pastor Jim

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Reservations for our Christmas Eve Service are still open ... but not for long. Stephanie Waiters has gathered a group of singers who will present "The Joy of Christmas" ... be prepared to have your heart touched and your spirit lifted.

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