

Front Quote:

"Sometimes God uses changes in the environment to pry idols from our grip and teach us something new."

-Rachel Held Evans

Order of Worship

Call to Worship: Isaiah 9:2-7

Lighting of the Fourth Candle of Advent

Songs of Praise to God

The Epistle Reading: Romans 1:2-7 (slight change from the bulletin)

The Greeting

We Return to God His Tithe and our Offerings

The Gospel Reading: Video (this is a change from the bulletin)

Message: "The Change that Christmas Brings"

Today's Psalm: Psalm 24:1-6

Morning Prayer

A Song of Praise

Benediction

SCRIPTURES:

Isaiah 9:2-7

The people who walk in darkness
will see a great light.
For those who live in a land of deep darkness,
a light will shine.
You will enlarge the nation of Israel,
and its people will rejoice.
They will rejoice before you
as people rejoice at the harvest
and like warriors dividing the plunder.
For you will break the yoke of their slavery
and lift the heavy burden from their shoulders.
You will break the oppressor's rod,
just as you did when you destroyed the army of Midian.
The boots of the warrior
and the uniforms bloodstained by war
will all be burned.
They will be fuel for the fire.
For a child is born to us,
a son is given to us.
The government will rest on his shoulders.
And he will be called:
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
His government and its peace
will never end.
He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David
for all eternity.
The passionate commitment of the Lord of Heaven's Armies
will make this happen!

Romans 1:1-7

This letter is from Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, chosen by God to be an apostle and sent out to preach his Good News. 2 God promised this Good News long ago through his prophets in the holy Scriptures. 3 The Good News is about his Son. In his earthly life he was born into King David's family line, 4 and he was shown to be the Son of God when he was raised from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit. He is Jesus Christ our Lord. 5 Through Christ, God has given us the privilege and authority as apostles to tell Gentiles everywhere what God has done for them, so that they will believe and obey him, bringing glory to his name. 6 And you are included among those Gentiles who have been called to belong to Jesus Christ. 7 I am writing to all of you in Rome who are loved by God and are called to be his own holy people.
May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

Luke 2: 8-16/John 1:1, 5, 9-12

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord."

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.

"This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

*Scripture excerpted from Luke 2:8-16 (NIV) and John 1:1, 5, 9-12, 14 (NIV)
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Inc.®*

Psalm 24:1-6

The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it.

The world and all its people belong to him.

For he laid the earth's foundation on the seas
and built it on the ocean depths.

Who may climb the mountain of the Lord?

Who may stand in his holy place?

Only those whose hands and hearts are pure,
who do not worship idols
and never tell lies.

They will receive the Lord's blessing
and have a right relationship with God their savior.

Such people may seek you
and worship in your presence, O God of Jacob.

The Change That
Christmas
Brings

SHOW LUKE 2/JOHN 1 VIDEO
TITLE SLIDE

The first restaurant that I ever ate at in Shippensburg was Mei Lins. But the restaurant that I have eaten at the most by far in our little town is the Select Diner. I have met with many students and adults over a meal or coffee at this eating establishment.

I, of course, got this habit of frequenting The Select from Pastor Todd.

As many of you know the Select Diner has been a big part of Pastor Todd's life for many years. It has often been referred to as "Pastor Todd's Office".

I am told that before he had a cell phone that it was common for people to call the Diner when they needed to get ahold of him.

Well, a while back the Select was bought by new owners.

Well, I will never forget the day that I met with Pastor Todd for breakfast on the opening day with the new owners.

We walked in and we could immediately tell that things were different

- the lights were obviously brighter
- you could actually see who you were eating with
- they had painted the walls
- the stains that had been there for years were gone
- the workers polo shirts were a different color
- and the menu had changed so much that we actually had to look at them
- see we hadn't needed to look at a Select menu for a while at this point.
- And the menu no longer had hand written section for the specials,

After we sat down in one of the booths I looked across the table at Pastor Todd and I saw on his face what can only be described as sheer terror

...I think that I even saw a tear in his eye

I asked him if he was okay

He replied, "I'm not sure. This place has not changed in the 15 years that I have been coming here. So I am not sure how to deal with this."

So what I saw in Pastor Todd's face was him trying to deal with the change going on around him at a restaurant that had NEVER changed before.

.....change is never easy.

We think sometimes that it is only when we get older that we struggle with change. But let me tell you from over a decade in youth ministry that teenagers struggle just as much with change.

-change is hard for any age

There was a movie that came out in the 1990s that had a character that expressed his feelings about change in an honest way that many of us can relate to:

-**SHOW "WAYNE'S WORLD" CLIP**

TITLE SLIDE

Weird scene? Yes! But remember it was the 90s.

Most of us if we were being honest with ourselves would agree with the character, Garth

-We FEAR change

in the beginning video we heard people telling about the angels visiting the shepherds.

And it says that their first reaction was that they were afraid.

-and of course we all would be if we were in their shoes

-this was a change in the norm in a big way

We all to a certain extent fear change

Because CHANGE:

-brings the unknown

-it requires us to adapt

-it threatens our comfort

-it's unpredictable

However, CHANGE is a part of life

-this was me at the very first youth group event at Ship Naz: **pic of JH trip to Caledonia**

-As you can see a few things have changed since then.

-I lost some hair and gained some weight

TITLE SLIDE

Christmas is the celebration of CHANGE

Jesus coming as a human child changed EVERYTHING!

-He changed things from LAW to RELATIONSHIP

However, this change was hard for people.

They had become comfortable in the routine of the law.

You can see throughout Jesus earthly ministry in the gospels how people were struggling with this dramatic change from law to relationship.

This relationship that we can have with the creator of the universe comes out of the change that Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection made in our world.

-and the very essence of our relationship with Jesus is CHANGE

-God is not satisfied with keeping us where we are in our faith

-the christian life is about growth

-and growth cannot happen without CHANGE

The CHANGE that Jesus wants to bring into our lives can threaten our COMFORT
-Just like Jesus was a threat to those who had become comfortable with the LAW and religious procedures.

C.S. Lewis said this: **SLIDE**

If you want a religion to make you feel really comfortable, I certainly do not recommend Christianity.

Christianity is rooted in change

It starts with Jesus coming and changing things from LAW to RELATIONSHIP

When we accept Jesus into our lives, Jesus changes our hearts into who he created us to be

TITLE SLIDE

This CHANGE that Jesus wants to make in our lives does not stop with ourselves
He then invites us to be a part of the CHANGE that He is doing in our hurting world

Bob Goff says it this way in his New Year Times Bestseller: "Love Does": **SLIDE**

Accepting the invitation to show up in life is about moving from the bleachers to the field. It's moving from developing opinions to developing options. It's about having things matter to us enough that we stop just thinking about those things and actually do something about them. Simply put, Jesus is looking for us to accept the invitation to participate.

TITLE SLIDE

This change that God is calling us to make in our own lives and the change that we are called to be about in our hurting world is often hindered by the idols that we create.

We cannot participate in what God is doing in our world with idols in our lives

There is a Story about Abraham that Jewish Rabbis would often tell

Abraham's father, Terach was an idol-manufacturer. Once he had to travel, so he left Abraham to manage the shop.

One day a woman came with a basket of bread. She said to Abraham, "Take this and offer it to the gods".

Abraham got up, took a hammer in his hand, and broke all the idols to pieces except for the largest one, and then put the hammer in the hand of the biggest idol among them.

When his father came back and saw the broken idols, he was appalled. "Who did this?" he cried. "How can I hide anything from you?" replied Abraham calmly. "A woman came with a basket of bread and told me to offer it to them. I brought it in front of them, and each one said, "I'm going to eat first." Then the biggest one got up, took the hammer and broke all the others to pieces."

His father replied, "an idol does not have a mind, and cannot do this."

Said Abraham: "Listen to what your own mouth is saying? They have no power at all! Why worship idols?"

(Midrash Bereishit 38:13)

PIC OF ABRAHAM AND IDOLS

Many Rabbis would go on to say that Abraham had to destroy these idols in his life before he was able to fully follow God.

TITLE SLIDE

Jesus coming to earth as a physical human being yet at the same time being 100% God changed the world forever.

And we are called to carry out his mission in our broken world.

We are all called to be world changers.

But we cannot do that when we are clinging to the idols in our lives.

Idol's creep into our lives when we move our focus away from Christ

Many things that start out as good things can become idols when we misplace them in our priorities.

The church has had many "idols" that they believed that you could not survive without:

- Followers of Christ eating pork
- A universe where the earth revolves around the sun Galileo
- non priests having access to the Bible
- The bible written in the common person's language
- A troublemaking pastor named Martin Luther King Jr. who wanted our churches to not be segregated.
- people worshipping with modern worship songs
- people wearing jeans to church
- the list goes on.....

Front Quote:

"Sometimes God uses changes in the environment to pry idols from our grip and teach us something new."

-Rachel Held Evans

I am thankful that God was not content with who I was before I knew him.

He was not content seeing me under the bondage of sin

He wanted to Change my life and remove the idols that I had created.

We can miss Jesus because he doesn't fit in with the idols that we have created

- 1) Mary and Joseph's family missed an opportunity to be there for these young, new parents because "status" had become their idol.
- 2) Herod missed Jesus because power and his position had become his idol
- 3) The other inn keepers missed Jesus because money had become their idol.
- 4) The other citizens in town (town of David) missed Jesus because their schedules had become their idol (the census)

"Psychiatrist Carl Jung once remarked, "Hurry is not of the Devil; it is the Devil." (Foster, 1978, p.15)

-I was working on this sermon yesterday at Panera and I ran into someone I know who talked to me about how heartbroken she was over how busy her family was during the Christmas season.

- 5) The religious leaders missed Jesus because their manmade laws and regulation (based on Scripture) had become their idol.

The holiday season is a beautiful time to have a change of pace from our normal schedules and be reminded about what is most important.

to celebrate the change Jesus' birth brought to our world
to celebrate the change that He has made in our own lives
and to remember the change we are to bring about in our hurting world

But we cannot be about God's CHANGE in our world when we allow idols to steal our focus and our priorities.

What is the idol in your life that is causing you to miss Jesus in our world?
What is the idol in your life that is keeping you from living out what God is calling you to do?

Whatever it is I pray that you take Abraham's example and take an ax to it.

And when it comes to God making changes in your life I want to leave you with the words that the angel told the shepherds:

"Do not be afraid. This CHANGE is good news that will cause great joy for all the people."