

**A Sermon Preached  
at  
St. George's Madrid  
by  
The Reverend Canon John W. Kilgore, M.D.  
25 December 2019  
Christmas  
Isaiah 62:1-12  
Titus 3:4-7  
Luke 2:1-20  
Psalm 96**

***“Do not be afraid; for see – I am bringing you good news of great joy for all people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.”***

Merry Christmas. A Blessed Christmas. Feliz Navidad. Joyeux Noel. Buon Natale. However you say it, in whatever language, it is Christmas. This is Christmas Day, one of the two highest holidays in the Christian year. That day commemorating when Christ our Savior came into the world. This holiday, Christmas, is our big holiday.

Our holiday is magical, powerful, mystical, and holy. It is a special day, a special time. A special season. Look at all the preparations and celebrations that have led up to this day – the parties, the concerts, the shopping, the wrapping, the decorating, sending cards, gatherings of family and friends. Look at the beautiful way Christ Church Cathedral is adorned for the event.

This time of year is magical. I was in New York City last week. If you have been there at Christmastime you know the aura of which I am about to speak. And if you have not you likely know of it from movies, television, or advertising. The streets are jammed with people of good cheer, pleasant and jovial, smiling. The Christmas tree is up in Rockefeller Plaza and the skaters are below. The sidewalks are very crowded but people don't seem to mind. The store windows have moving displays. And on the streets this weekend I heard people singing Christmas carols as they were shopping and saw people smiling and laughing. And gleeful children, looking at the displays and having photographs made with Santa. Truly a joyful season. New York is more special only because the people are so concentrated. That spirit pervades us all at this season. The decorations and mood are similar in Madrid, and Rome, and London. A great time of year.

Whether you are Christian or not you cannot escape the impact of Christmas on the world. The rituals of this season shape culture all over the world; among believers and non-believers alike. At the heart of that is the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, the long-awaited Messiah. The celebration of Christmas as a holiday has been observed since the fourth century. Not all faiths believe that Jesus was the Messiah though most acknowledge Him as a great prophet, at the least. Yet the impact on the world of his birth and this season are profound.

There was a period a few years ago when politically correctness was carried to the extreme. We couldn't say Merry Christmas, or have Christmas parties, etc. Instead we were to wish one another Happy Holidays, and season's greetings and have holiday parties and holiday trees. A number of years ago, in that era, I hear a story in the media where Muslims in England were saying we should indeed go ahead and have Christmas. We should make Christmas Christmas. The point of the story was for Muslims to have Ramadan, Jews Hannukah, Christians Christmas. All of us to have and celebrate our holidays, unabashedly.

I believe all religions have their place. God loves us all and we all have our different lens through which we view and meet God. We Christians aren't the only ones who know God. But we do have a unique and special relationship to God through the events of the Incarnation, the birth of Christ. If you don't believe that just look at the impact Christmas has on the world. Jesus in our lives makes us different. Christmas makes us different. Look at the world around us! Look at us here!

But with the blessing of that message comes a deep responsibility. Listen again to the Gospel message today, "I am bringing good news of great joy for all people." For ALL people. Let us make it that! Good news for ALL people. That doesn't mean we have to force our brand of religion, upon others. It doesn't mean all have to see God through our lens. But it does mean we have to love ALL people as our heavenly Father loves us, which was demonstrated with the Incarnation, the birth of Christ.

It is incumbent on us to make our message also a good message for all people by treating them with respect and showing them the unconditional love that the Father shows us. It is a message of good news for all people and we are to treat all people like that.

Let Hanukkah be Hanukkah. Let Ramadan be Ramadan. Let Christmas be Christmas! And celebrate Christmas! It is the greatest holiday of the year, regardless of your faith tradition. So those of us who know the joy and meaning of Christmas, and the power of having Jesus Christ in our lives should live it out as good news for all – loving them unconditionally as our Father loves us.

The Christmas season is magical, powerful, mystical, and holy. Revel in it. Sit here singing Christmas carols, remembering loved ones gone before and those you can't now be with. Say your prayers. Squeeze the hand of those you sit near today. And make your Christmas communion giving thanks for the message of the Incarnation, Jesus Christ among us. Christmas is special, and we are special in Christmas. Make Christmas Christmas! And give thanks to God for the impact it has in our lives and in the world.

A blessed Christmas to you all!

Amen.