

## HOMILY – CHRISTMAS 2018

The season of Christmas is a magical time of year. Churches are filled more than normal, families gather to celebrate, gifts are exchanged, and meals are shared. Certain Christmas songs speak to what this season should really be about. **“I’ll Be Home for Christmas”** reminds us of the importance of family and the necessity for relationships in our lives. **“Christmas Is for Children”** brings us into touch with our own childhood memories of Christmas and motivates us to build a world in which children and grandchildren might live in safety and grow to their potential. **“The Little Drummer Boy”** reminds us that each of us has a gift, and if we are willing to give our gift, to give the best that we have, we can find love and acceptance.

On this feast of Christmas Jesus and Santa take center stage. Both Jesus and Santa have a story. Their story reveals who they are and what they stand for. Santa’s story is told in a song we all know. Feel free to sing along.

**“You better watch out. You better not cry. You better not pout. I’m telling you why. Santa Claus is coming to town. He’s making a list. He’s checking it twice. He’s going to find out who’s naughty and nice. Santa Claus is coming to town. He sees you when you’re sleeping. He knows when you’re awake. He knows if you’re been bad or good. So be good for goodness sake!”**

This is Santa’s story. He is a wonderful old man who brings gifts to those who are good. But only to those who are good. If you cry or pout, if you’re nasty or bad – forget it – Santa is not coming to you. He has strict guidelines. There is nothing wrong with being good. In fact, parents find Santa and his story very useful this time of year. They remind their children that Santa is watching and that they should be good for goodness sake.

Jesus’s story is told in the Gospel we just heard. It is expressed in the song of the angels. They reveal who Jesus is. Jesus is the one who brings “joy to all the people.” Jesus is the one through whom God’s favor rests on all. You see, Santa comes to those who are good. Jesus comes to those who are good and bad alike. What is revealed in the story of Jesus is that Christmas is not about our goodness, but about God’s goodness. What we celebrate on this feast is not the good things that we have done, but the great things that God has done in Christ Jesus. Jesus’ story reveals the love of God, which is prior to any of our merits and present despite our sins.

Jesus comes to us, not because we are good, but because we need him, because we are sinful and broken and weak. What that means is that there is no person in this church tonight whom God does not love. No matter how much we have sinned; no matter how deeply we have failed; no matter how selfish we have been, God still loves us. God’s love is not based on our goodness, but upon God’s free choice. God’s love is for everyone. It comes to those who are healthy and those who are sick. It comes to those who are happy and those who are grieving a loss. It comes to those who are

hopeful and for those who are struggling with despair. It comes to those who are holy and to those who are sinners. In fact the whole message of Christmas aims to move us off of ourselves, around our troubles, out of our successes and failures, and enfold us in the universal love of God which is recreating the earth. This is Christmas joy. This is the Good News.

If Santa has a song for his story, maybe Jesus should have a song for his story. Here is one I found that might speak of Jesus' great story of hope.

**“There’s no need to watch out. It’s okay if you cry. You can sing or you can pout. I’m telling you why. Jesus Christ is coming to you. He’s forgotten his list. He forgives more than twice. He’s the Lord of us all, both naughty and nice. The Prince of Peace is coming to you. He sees you when you’re sleeping. He knows when you’re awake. He saves you if you’re bad or good. With a power no sin can break. So – put sadness aside. Let loose with a cry. There’s no reason to hide. I’m telling you why. THE LOVE OF GOD IS COMING TO YOU. MERRY CHRISTMAS.**