

January 1, 2017

Not Glossed Over
Luke 2: 15-21

Rev. Fiona Swanson

When I first was looking at the Lectionary Scripture for today
I had thought of using the reading from Matthew
that follows the arrival of the Wisemen
The sad and disturbing telling of the killing of the innocents....
Herod's paranoia at the thought
of a King being born to take over his throne,
But it didn't seem like a good way to start the year.
However, I chose not to change the sermon title
because I think that it is important to not gloss over
this part of the Christmas Story
or any part of the Bible that we find not as pleasing as others.

We would like to imagine that every story is only full of good...
but as we continue to see even in the past year –
such events still permeate our story.
Many waited for 2016 to end –finding it a difficult year...
the economical, political and world picture
seeming quite bleak...
but I fear that 2017 is looking to be a very unsettling year....

Gail read for us today about the shepherds
and the naming/circumcision of Jesus...
yesterday she texted that she was glad
it wasn't anything difficult...
I had thought at that moment about the naming of Jesus
and how Matthew has a good telling of Jesus' lineage...
complete with obscure names and difficult pronunciations –
but unfortunately there wasn't enough time
to make another change to the Order of Service ☺

So what does our Scripture share with us
as we begin this new year?
What hope does it bring?
What message is there for us?

I bring your attention to four points of the Scripture,
that hopefully sets us in good stead to step further
into the new year.

First we start in the manger scene –
the shepherds have come to visit
after hearing the message from the angels.
They find Mary and Joseph there

The third Lesson is about : Practicing our faith
In the midst of everything Mary and Joseph
took the time to follow God's law - to circumcise Jesus
To fulfill the law of the Torah
We too need to practice our faith... Through coming to church... even on days with
guest Ministers,
By reading the Bible, attending Bible study,
through prayer and contemplation.
Relationships require effort... both earthly and heavenly.
While on the island we stopped in Nanaimo
to visit a school friend I had not seen in 25 years.
It was lovely to see her and catch up...
but it was not the same as visiting a friend
I see more frequently ...who sees me in good and in bad...

Like becoming a professional hockey player,
or a NASA astronaut Our relationship with God needs practice and
dedication to get stronger...
May you practice your faith through
studying his word and eating at his table....
For his blood was shed for you... his body broken for you.

The fourth lesson... a foundation for the other three
Intimacy with God

On this 8th day Jesus is given his earthly name,
of flesh and blood...told to Mary before his birth

While in Victoria we visited my brother.

Garry asked him.... Whether he had a nick name.
AS Garry discovered that we all seem to...

Murray quickly said no – I don't remember ...and then said –
Fiona's was 'chief',
but I don't know why dad called her that.

Garry quickly replied – Didn't you live with her??

My brother smiled

and suddenly remembered why I was named chief.

Many people have nick names –

terms of endearment we give to each other....

Jesus wasn't a nick name, but by us being allowed to use it –
it shows how God has restored his people.

You see before then the people of Israel
did not speak God's name.

It was 'I am who I am'
or YHWH incomplete without vowels.

It was believed that if people couldn't pronounce it
they wouldn't take it in vain.

But that 8th day God stepped even closer to his people...

In his son Jesus Christ

Formality was lessened

A child of heaven and earth

Bridged the gap.

On this the first day of the new year...

And Tomorrow ...and the day after...

May you find yourselves embraced by God
swaddled in his love...

May you as you step further into this new year

Glorify God

Share the Good News

Ponder what God is doing

Practice your faith

And live in the intimacy of the relationship you have with God, the Father,

Through Jesus the son

With the power of the holy spirit

Amen.

feel, experience, ponder, glorify, share,