**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 12-11-2022
The World As It Is**

I just love the song, *Thy Word Is a* Lamp.

Hear these powerful words from this song:

They word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. When I feel afraid, think I’ve lost my way, still you’re there right beside me, and nothing will I fear as long as you are near. Please be near me to the end.

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. Now I will not forget your love for me and yet my heart forever is wandering. Jesus, be my guide and hold me to your side, and I will love you to the end. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.

This song is rooted in Scripture from **Psalm 119 verse 105**.

And it is a reminder that this world as it is, is a difficult one. We live in a fallen world. It is easy to feel afraid and lost and confused, but when we turn our hearts and minds to the Lord, we will find light for our path and peace for our soul. He gives us His presence and His Word to lead us and guide us.

But as we move towards Christmas, the ironic thing is that our culture wants us to pretend that everything is wonderful and merry around Christmas. That in the weeks surrounding Christmas, everyone should just be happy and light and merry and easy.

Think of the song *Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas.*

The reality, however, is that challenges and anxieties do not magically disappear in December.

But the good news, friends, is that we have a God who is bigger than our circumstances. And even with the world as it is, we are to be people of hope and peace and joy and love – because of Him.

This was certainly true in the events surrounding the first Christmas. People often remember the angel singing and the shepherds coming and the magi giving gifts to the Christ child.

But Matthew’s Gospel is a clear reminder that Jesus came to a world that is very broken in so many ways, as Magrey R. deVega shares in their book *Awaiting the Already – An Advent Journey Through the Gospels.*

Let us consider a couple of events that Matthew includes.

First, hear these words from Matthew 1:18-21.

**18This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+1%3A18-21&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23163a)**]: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. 19Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet[**[**b**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+1%3A18-21&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23164b)**] did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.**

**20But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus,[**[**c**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+1%3A18-21&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23166c)**] because he will save his people from their sins.”**

These are the first words Matthew includes in his gospel after the genealogy of Jesus. And this story about Joseph reveals that even for godly people like Mary & Joseph, the coming of Christ helps unveil the brokenness in everyone. Mary & Joseph needed the savior as much as anyone.

And even for a godly man who wanted to live faithfully to the Lord, in his brokenness, Joseph at first does not believe Mary’s story.

He only saw two options when he learned of his fiancé’s pregnancy, to divorce her quietly or to make an example out of her. He chose the far kinder and more loving option of quietly divorcing her and looking like a jerk in the process, but again, Joseph did not believe Mary until an angel comes to him to confirm Mary’s words.

So we see even before the birth of Jesus that the coming of Jesus would be stretching for Joseph. Jesus’ coming did not make Joseph’s and Mary’s life easier. For the rest of their days, Joseph & Mary would have had a reputation of having an illegitimate son in the eyes of many people. Truly, Christmas came with a cost for Joseph, but I’m sure the cost was more than worth it for the privilege of being the earthly father to his savior and king.

And speaking of kings, this leads to another story from Matthew’s Gospel. The story of King Herod. If there was ever a villain in the Bible, Herod would be right up there near the top of the list.

King Herod was known as Herod the Great, because of his successful building projects. But Herod was a tyrant and was jealous of anyone he saw as a rival. This would certainly include the new born King of the Jews.

Matthew tells us that after the magi had left them, the Lord sends an angel to warn Joseph.

Hear these words from Matthew 2:13-18.

**13When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.”**

**14So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, 15where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called my son.”[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+2%3A13-18&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23185a)**]**

**16When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. 17Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:**

**18“A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.”[**[**b**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+2%3A13-18&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23188b)**]**

Again, we think about the world as it is. The first Christmas and the events surrounding it, was not all merry and bright.

There was fear and confusion and evil men bringing harm on weak and innocent children. There were people fleeing for their lives.

Friends, these are not typically the things we consider when we are thinking about Christmas. But Matthew reminds us that Jesus came into a world that is very much bound up by sin.

But none of this is a surprise to the LORD. For Joseph is instructed by an angel of the Lord to name his son Jesus. **And the name Jesus literally means the LORD saves.**

Jesus’ very name speaks to what he came to do. He came to save people from their sins, and Matthew 1:21 proclaims.

In our world today, it doesn’t take long to see the many ways that the world as it is, is so very broken. Yes, the kingdom of God is advancing and the gospel is spreading. But we also live in a world where as it is:

* Millions of unborn children are legally killed each year.
* Where - wealthy corporations often use their power to exploit and sensor people
* Where people lose their employment or are not giving medical treatment because of their decision not to take an experimental vaccine.
* Where children are sexualized in unhealthy ways at a very early age
* Where we are pressured to affirm people identifying as whatever gender or animal they like
* Where people seek to divide races against one another, rather than bringing people together
* Where we even have a Satan club in our local school district seeking to teach evil things to our children
* And perhaps worst of all, much of the American church just goes along with whatever the culture says is right or wrong.

Yes, the world as we know it is a dark and broken place. But into that darkness, the light of Jesus came. And into that darkness, the light of Jesus continues to come.

Yes, the world as it is, is far from heaven. But the good news is that in Jesus we can experience living above the world as it is.

The world as it is does not have hope for the future, but we as Christians can and should be people of hope.

The world as it is does not have true peace, but Christians can have peace that passes understanding.

The world as it is does not have joy, but Christians can have the joy of the Lord at all times.

**So what is the point of all of this?**

**It is that Matthew reminds us that while the world as it is, is broken and bound up in sin, Jesus came to set people free**.

Perhaps your Advent season has been one of much happiness. Or maybe it is been one with lots of challenges and trials.

No matter your experience, by knowing Jesus we can live above the world as it is. Jesus came to change the world, one person at a time. And it is not by pretending that everyone is great and our troubles are far away, but it is by keeping our eyes fixed on Him.

Around this time of year, people are often drawn to the church or drawn back to the church. And I think it is because the Lord is revealing to them that Jesus is the only One that can help.

On Christ the solid rock we are to stand, all other ground is sinking sand.

Sources: Awaiting the Already by Magrey R. deVega

[www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)

Thy Word Is a Lamp - #601 UM Hymnal

Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas by Frank Sinatra

<https://www.google.com/search?q=Have+yourself+a+merry+little+christmas+lyrics&source=hp&ei=d6-OY5DyIJWf5NoPk4yL0Ac&iflsig=AJiK0e8AAAAAY469hyfNkeYzB7tJP6mqwTvF8DR3Utb4&ved=0ahUKEwjQiaen_-P7AhWVD1kFHRPGAnoQ4dUDCAo&uact=5&oq=Have+yourself+a+merry+little+christmas+lyrics&gs_lcp=Cgdnd3Mtd2l6EAMyCAgAEIAEELEDMgUIABCABDIFCAAQgAQyBQgAEIAEMgUIABCABDIFCAAQgAQyBQgAEIAEMgUIABCABDIFCAAQgAQyBQgAEIAEOhEILhCABBCxAxCDARDHARDRAzoLCC4QgAQQxwEQrwE6CwgAEIAEELEDEIMBOggILhCABBDUAjoICC4Q1AIQgAQ6BQguEIAEOggIABCxAxCDAToOCC4QsQMQgwEQxwEQ0QM6CAguEIAEELEDOgUIABCxAzoLCC4QgAQQsQMQ1AI6CwguELEDEMcBENEDOgQIABADOgsILhCABBCxAxCDAToICC4QsQMQgwE6DgguEIAEELEDEIMBENQCOgsILhCDARCxAxCABDoGCAAQChADUABY4Txg6j1oAHAAeACAAWyIAZgYkgEENDQuMZgBAKABAQ&sclient=gws-wi>