

**ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
COMPASS, PA**

December 25, 2021 – CHRISTMAS DAY (YR. C)

The Rev. Dr. Nina George-Hacker

Homily: *"A Christmas Letter from Jesus"*

Isaiah 62:6–7, 10–12 (The Lord proclaims: Salvation is coming!)
Psalm 97:1, 6, 8-12 (Rejoice and give thanks for God's justice and mercy)
Titus 3:4-7 (Justified by Christ's grace, we hope for eternal life)
St. Luke 2:8-20 (Shepherds visit the newborn Jesus)

How many of you send Christmas letters to family and friends? And how would you feel if you received a Christmas letter from Jesus? Well, it might go something like this ...

Dear Children,

It has come to my attention that many of you are upset that people are taking My Name out of the season. Maybe you've forgotten that I wasn't actually born during this time of the year, and that it was your predecessors who decided to celebrate My birthday on what was actually the date of a pagan festival. However, I do appreciate being remembered any time.

How I personally feel about this celebration perhaps can be most easily understood by those of you who have been blessed with children of your own. I don't care what you call the day. If you want to celebrate My birth, just get along with, and love one another.

Now, having said that, let Me go on. If it bothers you that the town in which you live doesn't allow a scene depicting My birth, then just get rid of a couple of Santas and snowmen and put a small Nativity scene on your own front lawn. If all My followers did that, there wouldn't be any need for such a scene in the village square because there would be many of them all around town.

Stop worrying about the fact that people are calling the tree a holiday tree, instead of a Christmas tree. It was I who made all trees. You can remember Me anytime you see any tree. Decorate a grape vine if you wish: I actually spoke of that one in a teaching, explaining who I am in relation to you and what each of our tasks were. If you've forgotten that, look up John 15:1–7:

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. ... Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you."

If you want to give Me a present in honor of My birth, here is my wish list. Choose something from it:

- Instead of writing protest letters objecting to the way My birthday is being celebrated, write letters of love and hope to soldiers far away from home. They are terribly afraid and lonely this time of year. I know, because they talk to Me about it all the time.
- Visit someone in a nursing home or retirement community. You don't have to know them personally. They just need to know that anyone cares about them.

- Instead of emailing your boss to complain about the wording on the cards he sent to the staff this year, call and tell him you'll be praying for him and his family during the holidays. Then follow up with another kindness. He'll find it is nice hearing from you again.
- Instead of giving your kids and grandchildren a lot of gifts you can't afford and they don't need, spend time with them. Tell them the story of My birth, and why I came to live with you down here. Hold them in your arms and remind them that I love them.
- Pick someone that has hurt you in the past, and forgive him or her.
- Did you know that someone in your community will attempt to take his or her own life this season because they feel so alone and hopeless? Since you don't know who that person is, try giving everyone you meet a warm smile, or offer an encouraging word; it could make all the difference.
- Instead of nit-picking about what the retailer in your town calls this holiday, be patient with the people who work at that store. Give them a friendly smile and a kind word. Even if they aren't allowed to wish you a "Merry Christmas," that doesn't keep you from wishing them one. And stop shopping there on Sunday! If the store didn't make so much money on the Sabbath, they'd close and let their employees spend the day at home with their families.
- If you really want to make a difference, support a missionary—especially one who takes My love and Good News to those who have never heard My name.
- There are individuals and whole families in your community who not only will have no "Christmas" tree, but neither will they have any presents to give or receive. If you don't know them, buy some food and a few gifts and give them to the Salvation Army or another charity which believes in Me and they will make the delivery for you.
- Finally, if you want to make a statement about your belief in and loyalty to Me, then *behave like a Christian*. Don't do anything in secret that you wouldn't do in My presence. Let people know by your actions that you are one of Mine.

And remember: I am God and can take care of Myself. Just love Me and do what I have told you to do. I'll take care of all the rest. Check out the list above and get to work; time is short. I'll help you, but the ball is now in your court. And do have a most blessed Christmas with all those whom you love, and don't ever forget: I LOVE YOU,

JESUS