

## WHO'S COMING HOME THIS CHRISTMAS?

This Advent, we have been journeying to Christmas with a special message series (preaching series) called **CHRISTMAS IS COMING!!! What are you hoping for?** We have done this to truly deepen our understanding how an event that took place over two thousand years ago can occur in our very own lives today and how it leads to the gift of eternal life in the future.

### WHAT ARE WE ACTUALLY HOPING FOR THIS CHRISTMAS?

I remember that for the longest time my oldest brother Ted, would begin and end his Christmas shopping on Christmas Eve. He would actually head out to the mall and do his shopping on the craziest day of the year!! I remember going with him a few times and it was simply mayhem. Despite the fact that he was able to make his purchases, the experience itself was not really worth it. It was agony finding that parking space, fighting through the crowds and trying to find that special gift. It was not a pleasant experience.

I am sure that we have all been caught up in this mayhem already and will be for the next few days. Even though buying gifts for others is a great thing, we can go a bit too far. We can lose sight of what we are actually hoping for — the presence of Jesus in our lives!! He is the key to Christmas and he is the one that we should be looking for during this holy season.

This may seem quite obvious but have we actually taken the time to prepare to receive Jesus or have we been too busy doing other things? Have we missed the chance to draw close to Christ and receive his hope during this sacred season?

### HOPING FOR JESUS

The Scriptures shows us the great love story of God and humanity. Despite the weaknesses and sinfulness of humanity, God is ever

faithful to his covenant of love and as we see in the Old Testament, sought out opportunities to re-establish this relationship. This was expressed through Abraham, Noah, Moses and the prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Yet humanity failed to respond faithfully, always turning away. Ultimately, the prophets spoke of a time when the Messiah was to come and save all of us. He was to be the perfect expression of God's love and the perfect response of humanity to the call of love.

Of course, the prophets prepared the path for Jesus. He is the one who sets prisoners free, who gives sight to the blind, allows the deaf to hear and brings enemies together in peace. He finds,

repairs, heals and illuminates those who are lost, forgotten, hurt or in darkness.

This is the hope that is fulfilled with Jesus and this is what he can also do for us today as we celebrate

Christmas.

### FINDING JESUS AT CHRISTMAS

Are we looking for peace, forgiveness, strength or healing in our lives or in the lives of those around us?

If the answer is yes, then finding Jesus this Christmas is essential for us. Here are a few ways you can be sure to discover Christ this joyous season and have our lives changed!!

### (1) CONFESSION

One way to definitely invite Jesus into our hearts and meet us in our messiness is to go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This is a sacrament of peace, seeking to heal our hearts and let go sin, anger and frustration. It is a place of grace, love and freedom. It takes courage and humility to go to confession and yet the graces

and joy surpasses it all!! This is one of the most direct ways to encounter Jesus, fully alive and directly involved in our lives.

### (2) OUTREACH

One of the most powerful moments of the Advent season for me in the parish is the opportunity to see the unbelievable generosity of everyone who is involved in our Christmas Hamper program. The countless hours of organizing, shopping and sorting in addition to the generous financial gifts is quite overwhelming. It is wave upon wave of love and service to those in need.

This season of generosity reminds us to love, serve and give all the time. A generous heart to those in need allows us to meet Christ in those whom we serve. We learn and grow from those who are poor, forgotten or on the fringes. They are literally Jesus for us!! Take a look at ways within the parish and beyond to volunteer and share your life with others!!

### (3) BUILD COMMUNITY

The strength of our parish is the sense of community that we have. The only way to have community is to slow down and take time with one another. We really have to make an effort to connect with new people and in that engagement we support, care and love each other. We find common ground and we share our experiences — both good and bad, seeking to help each other on this journey to the kingdom.

Building community takes trust, courage and patience but when invested, we see Jesus in the eyes of those around us. We discover more about ourselves and we are reminded that we are never alone on this journey.

Do you want healing, strength, peace and love in your life? Invite Jesus into your hearts this Christmas and he can be your hope fulfilled today.

