

Christ Lutheran Church

“*God with Us*” Advent Worship Series

December 23, 2018: Our Guide

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There is a little verse of Scripture that may be familiar to us. In 2 Corinthians 5:7, St. Paul writes, “We walk by faith, not by sight” (RSV). And that is one of those passages from Scripture that we all agree with. We know that our life as a child of God is a life of faith—a faith given to us by God’s Holy Spirit.

For a great many of us, that happened at our Baptism, where through Water and the Word, the Holy Spirit worked faith in our hearts. Or, for some of us, it may have been later in life, when, by the Spirit working through the Word of God, we were brought to faith—to know and believe in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.

Either way, it is a true saying that on this pilgrim path we walk as children of God, we walk by faith, not by sight.

In other words, we know that God is Immanuel—God with us. We know that God is protecting us, that God is guiding us, even though we may not be able to actually see him. Yet our faith assures us that God is indeed with us, even though what we see may try to convince us that such is not the case.

And while we may intellectually agree that it is true that we walk by faith, not by sight, in reality that is just a bunch of words until we find ourselves in a place where we cannot see—when everything around us becomes too big, and our faith

seems so small.

What is more frightening is if we are lost spiritually. We are lost in such a way that the pastor can't simply answer our questions. And believe it or not, when pastor's experience it for themselves, life is a lot harder to deal with than just reading Bible passages and it makes it all better. For some reason it is much more complicated than that when it comes to faith. It is not quite so easy to just say, "We walk by faith, not by sight."

How well do you handle THE UNKNOWN? What if suddenly you realize "I don't know what to do now. It's a feeling of being lost, lost in the dark. How would you react? Would you react with total calmness, or would there be feelings of fear? Perhaps terror? Would you reach out for others? Would you call out?

Have you ever had a guide? Like a guide on a trail. You trust the guide. He knows the lay of the land. He knows the dangers of going in the forest. He has walked this path before and he will lead you in the safe places.

That is who Jesus is to us. He is our guide because he has walked this road before. He became a man just like us. He was hungry, tired, and even angry occasionally. He was without sin, despite his life walking in a sinful world. And most of all he felt pain, was tortured, and died for your sin and mine. He walked that road before and he knows what it is like to be you. So that leads us to trust in him. Most of all, we can have faith in him because he has revealed to us his intentions to lead us to his love, his grace, and into heaven itself.

At the end of the day, we have to follow someone. Even those so called atheists end up worshipping something. Maybe it is gods of intellect and survival. Maybe material riches or success. The Old Testament often times references the word “follow” when it comes to idols. People followed gods such as Baal and Molech. But look at the outcomes of their misplaced faith, Infant mortality, mutilation, and suffering for nothing. Wide is the road to destruction, and narrow is the path to righteousness.

Two choices lie in front of us. A highway to heaven. Or a highway to hell.

The guide of God being with us is exactly what the coming Savior brings. He is the light of the world, and when we are given faith, we are given that light to guide us, to help us on our pilgrim journey through life. Jesus always leads us to the same place. Even when we have chosen hell in the past, He leads us to the cross. At the start of his life, our Lord was headed from a wooden manger to a wooden cross. He walked that path alone and even the disciples abandoned him. Then Jesus keeps going and leading us to our resurrection to be with him.

With that in mind our journey is not our own. Instead of worrying about where we will end up, we should look outwardly about what our choices will mean for others. Where can I best serve others? Where can I use my gifts? Where would God like me to be so I reach out to the lost who truly do not know the way to heaven?

Soon we will be offering calls for a new pastor, new principal, and new people to serve as church workers in our congregation. Imagine how each one of those

called people will have to wrestle with God's plan for their life. Maybe it means moving away from family. Maybe it means giving up the comforts of familiar faces and places. Maybe it means going somewhere that will be the hardest challenge they have ever had in their entire lives. All those things seem like reasons to not go somewhere. But when the reason is to serve God and to serve others, all those things melt away when you see your purpose to follow God's lead.

Certainly big decisions like that need a lot of prayer and contemplation. But we have Jesus to follow, and He will lead us to fulfill his will, which is the greatest way we could ever live. We are building a road. We are building a highway, not just for ourselves, but so others can find their way to Jesus.

Certainly, we pass through times where we have made God absent in our lives. Certainly many of the trials of life can cause us to fall into a valley of deep doubt and despair. But we are confident in spite of our lowest place, no valley is so deep that Christ is not there, no passage through the expanse of chaos is so long that he will not be there waiting for us.

Now at the end of this Advent season, as Christmas comes nearer, we are again reminded that Christ is coming to us, to each of us, to be our guide in life. Jesus is our guide as we "walk by faith." Christ is coming again—to our lost world on our broken journey. And we shout the good news from the housetops: "Prepare the royal highway; the King of kings is near!" Jesus is coming soon to lead us into heaven! Amen.

