

Merry Christmas, everyone! This year, we have Christmas Day on Sunday. On this day, we are here to worship. I am glad that you are worshiping with us wherever you are and whatever time zone you are in right now. Welcome to Kona United Methodist Church online worship.

Last month, several pastor friends and I discussed how to go about "Christmas Day on Sunday." In the discussion, I found that some churches surrender and cancel services altogether or hold some brief, modified, or drop-in service. Others decide to have a celebration of family and faith. Some determine that it is a children's day, letting people come in their pajamas and bring a gift to talk about. Each church has its own way of celebrating "Christmas Day on Sunday" to meet the need of its own community. There is no right or wrong way to celebrate "Christmas Day on Sunday."

However, one thing we all agreed on was that "Christmas Day" is not really our day or the family's day, even though we have our family traditions or church traditions on this day. This day is about Jesus. I believe that all of us are here today because of this Jesus, not because of anything else. If you are looking for something else in this service, to be honest with you, you are at the wrong place, wasting your time here.

First and foremost, Christmas Day is when the distance between heaven and earth is removed. It is the day God set up camp among us. God moved into our neighborhood or "tented among us," which is what Apostle John says in the Gospel of John, chapter 1, verse 14. It is about the closeness of the living presence of God, incarnate in the one we call Jesus.

Some said to me that I have too much "Jesus." Well, I guess I am. But I don't know what else to say or preach about. Christian faith is all about this Jesus, especially on this Christmas Day. Everything about Christianity starts with this one person born to us on Christmas Day. Wise beyond description! Brave in amazing ways! Uniquely self-sacrificing! And loving in ways we would dream of being!

However, I know that this Jesus thing we say and do as the followers of Jesus Christ is difficult to comprehend for those who are not in the Christian faith. Even

for us, the active followers of Jesus Christ, understanding Jesus is not easy. There is always a "yes, but" when it comes to Jesus. Or maybe it is a "yes, and." Words fail us in the end. Words capture pieces and pictures, but not the whole of that Jesus thing we say and do.

So, what's left is poetry. At least, that is Apostle John's response. When explanation fails, go for poetry or music. Our text for today is a song of praise for the nature of Christ. It is a theological doxology. In this hymn that Apostle John has written, we discover that this Jesus thing is about us as much as it is about Jesus. Yes, it adds a layer of eternity to the man from Nazareth. And it wrestles with the Doctrine of the Trinity.

But when the song begins to include us, we move to the edge of our seats. When Apostle John sings of the life that is the light of all people, we hold our breath because we have both seen and touched it and have wept for the lack of it. We lean forward toward that light, like a plant seeking sustenance from the sun. We have beheld that glory. And we have known Him not. We are both acceptors and deniers, often at the same time.

We have tasted. We have received grace upon grace, and sometimes it is enough. Other times we wrestle with the world, our doubts, and our sins. We do lose our grip from time to time. And we wonder what this Jesus thing is all about. We wonder if it is worth the struggle, the misunderstanding. Wouldn't the world be better if we just stopped worrying about what it is that we believe? Couldn't we just give in a little bit on that Jesus thing?

That Jesus thing, according to Apostle John, is nothing less than life itself—the life in all its fullness, the life in all its depth and meaning, the life as we long to live it. The Jesus thing is all about caring for the world, caring for the sick and those who concern, and caring about you and me. Christmas Day is about this caring. We can't be who we are or who we long to be without that Jesus thing. Christmas Day is the day this Jesus born to us to give us life because He cares. You and I might be nobody to this world, but not to our God. So, let us just receive the Son of God born to us today and have life, the life of eternity, on this Christmas Day. Because of Him, we say, "Merry Christmas!" Amen? Amen.