



MERRY CHRISTMAS LAKE CHURCH FAMILY! (From Pastor Jim and Debbie)



May we ALL rediscover **HOPE** this Christmas season.

First, it's important to remember that Christmas was GOD's IDEA. It wasn't something He just stumbled upon; sending His Son Jesus to earth in the form of a helpless Baby was HIS idea. It was the BEST thing HE could do for us, the BEST gift we could receive.

Second, God gave us His people clues (prophecies) throughout the Old Testament that the Messiah was coming.

Third, Jesus' birth fulfilled ALL the approximately 300 prophecies in the Old Testament about the birth of the Messiah, Jesus the Christ.

Fourth, THIS story – never old – can provide us all HOPE through the Dark Times.

In the Old Testament, those saints were looking FORWARD to the first Advent, the FIRST Coming of the Messiah. We today – on the other side of Jesus' birth – are looking forward too to His Second Coming, aka the Second Advent. That should fill your heart with HOPE.

HOPE: *"To trust in, wait for, look for, or desire something or someone; or to expect something beneficial in the future."*

Jeremiah said: **"Our hope is in you."** (Jer 14:22). It infers a sense of trust. That the LORD was the HOPE of Israel. (And HE is our HOPE today!)

Old Testament believers were encouraged to wait for God hopefully, expectantly. In times of trouble to wait for the Lord who would turn things around. (Ps 27:14 – **"Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD."**)

In the Old Testament hope is linked with "putting confidence in" or "taking refuge in." Paul also parallels hope with trust. He hopes to send Timothy and trusts in the Lord that he himself will come (Phil 2:23). Hebrews talks about courage and hope (3:6). Likewise, Paul links hope and boldness (2 Cor 3:12 – **"Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech..."**)

We can have confidence in God's promises, Hebrews 6:19 – **"This hope is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls. It leads us through the curtain into God's inner sanctuary."**

And so, I want to ENCOURAGE each of you to WAIT upon the Lord and renew your strength as you put your HOPE in Him. Don't read or listen to the news. Instead, read or listen more to the Word of God. (Idea – how about “equal time?” If you are a news junkie, for every 30 minutes you watch, listen or read, spend an EQUAL amount of time with God in prayer and reading His Word.) You might START with Luke 1, and re-read the Christmas story and then the LIFE of Jesus as told in an orderly fashion by Doctor Luke. IF you do, I guarantee a personal HOPE and HAPPINESS increase.

Blessings, love, and Merry Christmas from us!

Pastor Jim and Debbie

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**LOOKING AHEAD:**

**Sunday Dec 19** – LIVE church 10am (Conference Center, LIVE Streaming or Afternoon replay). **“Joseph and the PROMISE”** (Pastor Jim) Special decorations by Susan York and her Team!



**Christmas Eve – 4pm – *Carols and Candlelight!*** A short, sweet service with lots of music, a short encouraging talk by pastor Jim and closing with **Silent Night** by Candlelight. Perfect for your non-churched friends who want to “*make it to church for Christmas.*”

**Sunday Dec 26** – Church Service 10am – **“Wise Men Still Seek Him”** (Pastor Jim) What the GIFTS they brought were all about.

**January 2022 – A New Series for the New Year: *Wise Living in a Foolish World***

There are only two types of decisions we can make. From a human perspective, we could call them either good decisions or bad decisions. From God's perspective, He would call them wise decisions or foolish decisions. Just as every parent wants to train their children to make wise decisions, God wants His children to make wise decisions. There's a KEY question you can learn to ask that will help you do just that!

**Sunday January 2:**

**Wise Living in a Foolish World #1 --“How to Enjoy a Happier New Year!”**

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Some Thoughts from the Board Chairman

As we think about Christmas and everything that goes with it, I'm reminded that there is the "religious" celebration and then there is the "secular" celebration, of which Santa Claus is probably the biggest part. But if you look closely into Santa, his roots are very much part of the "religious" aspect of the holiday. The name "Santa Claus" actually comes from a man known as St. Nicholas of Bari.



St. Nicholas lived from 270 AD to 343 AD in an area of Greece that is now part of Turkey. From a wealthy family, he became a Catholic priest as a young man. To him it was a calling, not just a career path as it was for so many at that time. He dedicated his ministry to sailors, carpenters, various other craftsmen, but mostly to children, which, at that time, included a lot of negotiating freedom for boys and girls abducted by pirates, marauding Turks, and the like.

It is said that it was his well-known habit of gift giving that gave rise to the traditional model of Santa Claus. One account that I read said that on Christmas Day he would dress up in a red suit and visit brothels where he would buy the freedom of young girls who had been sold into prostitution by their poor families who could not support them. I didn't find more confirmation of this, but it makes a

good story. Other accounts are less dramatic. Reportedly, he would give money to poor families so they would have a decent dowry to attract good husbands for their daughters. Otherwise, the girls would probably end up being sold into slavery as a means of supporting the rest of the family. It is said he would go to the house at night and throw money through a window. The coins would land in the stockings and shoes set out by the fireplace over night to dry. Thus evolved the tradition of the "Christmas Stocking".

Over the centuries the image of him has changed from tall and thin to "chubby and plump", as he was described in the poem "The Night Before Christmas" by Clement Moore. He has been known by several names around the world: Father Christmas, Pere Noel, Santa Claus, Julemanden, Kris Kringle, Babbo Natale, and many more. But we should always remember that the original Santa Claus (St. Nicholas himself), the person the legend is based on, was a real man who had dedicated his life to serving our Lord, Jesus Christ. Santa, the generous, happy, jolly old elf, is based on a real person who followed the teachings of Jesus and actually did real good deeds and helped real people in need as a part of his Christian ministry.

God Bless Everyone and MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Art Pedersen, Board Chairman