

Sermon for December 24th, 2014

Christmas Eve service

BLESSINGS TO YOU AND PEACE FROM GOD THE FATHER, OUR LORD
AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

MERRY CHRISTMAS!!!! This is it!!! *O Holy Night*, the **night** we have
been waiting for. The reason to **celebrate** the season is upon us!!! The Christ
child is **here** in the manger. God's **promise** to the world has arrived. We give
praise to our Heavenly Father because the Word made flesh has come to **dwell**
among us. This is the child who was **propheesied** about by Isaiah. In our reading
for tonight we heard "*For a child has been born for us, a son given, authority rests
on his shoulders, he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting
Father, Prince of Peace. He will establish and uphold endless peace with justice
and with righteousness forevermore.*" **Emmanuel—God with us!!! Hallelujah.**
Tonight we rejoice for the gift fulfilled!!!

One of our **beloved** Christmas hymns, *O Holy Night*—which Bob Frey will
be singing at the candlelight service—begins, *O holy night, the stars are brightly
shining. It is the night of our dear Savior's birth.* God's long awaited Son is here
to **save us** from our sin, here to **save us** from our suffering, here to **save us** from
our pain, here to **save us** from.....(you can fill in this blank.)

*O Holy Night, Long lay the world in sin and error pining till He appeared
and the soul felt His worth. A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices, for yonder
breaks a new and glorious morn. Fall on your knees, O hear the angel voices.*

Through God's **gift** of His one and only Son, this **tiny** baby whose birth changes the course of history forever, we have been **given** the promise of everlasting life. Promised with the **blessing** of God's grace, mercy, and love forevermore no matter **what** happens to us in this world. The promise **foretold** has come to pass.

Hallelujah. Tonight we rejoice for the gift fulfilled!!!

*O Holy Night, Chains shall He break for the slave is our brother and in
His name all oppression shall cease. Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise
we.* My dear friends, in the birth of this **precious** child the whole world has been made a better place even though on the surface it **may not seem** as though that is true. We live in a world where even though there is **suffering and pain**—of which there is much, a world where even though there is **sin and violence**—of which there is much, a world where even though we have our own **personal hardships and challenges**—of which some of us have many, we **know** that God has come—on a night **much** like this—to **walk among us**, to **heal** the wounds of the world, to **love us** through the rough times, to show us how to **forgive** one another, to be with us when there is **no one else**, to show us what true grace, mercy, and love is. **This** is what the miracle of Christmas is about.

It is the **promise** that because of God's Son coming to this world in the **form** of a baby, one **just** like us, we will no longer ever be alone, that we will have God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit with us to **guide** us on our journey.

Hallelujah. Tonight we rejoice for the gift fulfilled!!!

O Holy Night, Let all within us praise His holy name. Christ is the Lord, let ever, ever praise Thee. Oh, night, oh night divine. On this holy night, I would like to conclude with some of the words of a poem by Alfred Lloyd Tennyson. It is called:

Ring Out, Wild Bells

*Ring out the want, the care, the sin. The faithless coldness of the times.
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes, but ring the fuller minstrel in.
Ring out false pride in place and blood, the civic slander and the spite;
Ring in the love of truth and right, Ring in the common love of good.
Ring out old shapes of foul disease, Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
Ring out the thousand wars of old, Ring in the thousand years of peace.
Ring in the valiant man and free, the larger heart, the kinder hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land, Ring in the Christ that is to be.*

Merry Christmas and May God bless you all in the New Year. AMEN

