

A Few Thoughts for the Hunkered Down

Tuesday, December 29, 2020

To Us a Child is Born

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given. —Isaiah 9:6

As many are aware, there has been a recent boom in the number of grandchildren in the Haun family and like any new grandparents Kay and I have had quite a trip down memory lane as we are being reminded of what life was like when our kids arrived. While the joys we know as parents and grandparents are boundless, there is another side to the matter, and though some have taken offense when I have spoken of this other side of parenting, I insist that it is a matter worthy of discussion. To see this sudden amount of work and disruption dropped upon our boys and their wives at the arrival of a new family member has occasionally filled my heart with some real sympathy and heartache for all they are going through. This is real work, and I am hard pressed to remember any other time in my experience when my whole way of life was so assaulted! The lack of sleep has always been the toughest one for me, but there are numerous other stresses and adjustments which confront the new parent and quickly rearrange their whole life.

Children are natural born anarchists and a home with a newborn is a household struggling to maintain some kind of order and regular function. It is the task of a couple to give their home some semblance of schedule and organization, and it is the sworn duty of every newborn to see that this carefully arranged system is turned to chaos. Infants are needy creatures, some more than others, and they cause us to put aside a myriad of other concerns and projects which had previously made up our lives so that we can wait upon them. It is a great comfort to know that in just a matter of weeks and months the level of chaos begins to lessen, but truth be told, the illusive “back to normal” never really comes.

I report all this, not to deny the joys of becoming a parent, but to be honest about all that is involved in the experience. After a young new member joins the family there never really comes a “back to normal,” and the good news is that mom and dad would never want to go back to that normal! The home has just become a lot richer and fuller, and who would want it any other way?

Nor is it my intent to speak badly of the little ones, anarchist though they may be. They come into the world with a very different perspective than ours, and they have so much to learn. What a delight to be able to engage even the youngest child—to smile and share joy with them, and to cry with them in their sadness and frustration in their many pains and trials. From teething to just learning to manipulate their own limbs

they have so much hard work ahead of them! Part of a parent's adventure is entering into their world and striving to understand their experience and way of thinking, that we can better engage and love them.

Isaiah prophesied the first coming of Christ with a simple proclamation. *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given.* The thought of God humbling Himself to come as an infant is both startling and heartwarming. It should also give us a little extra perspective on what it means to receive the newborn King. Jesus has come that we might joyously claim Him as our own! And like any other newborn, Jesus presents us, with Mary and Joseph, with a lot of work and disruption. It is not always an easy thing to be a believer and follower of Christ as He presents us with numerous commands to obedience and service. Jesus calls us to reorganize our life priorities. As we see and hear our Lord preaching and ministering, we are drawn into His vision of the Kingdom of God. We begin to see life differently. Those who seek the Christ quickly discover that a once Sunday morning kind of faith quickly becomes a 24/7 way of life. Claiming the Christ Child as ours is an expensive venture, just as any child incurs great expense for a household. The Christ Child makes real demands upon those who will receive and embrace Him, and it is worth every penny.

This Christmas season (and remember that it continues to January 5) may you be blessed, and challenged by this sweet and disruptive Savior who has come so humbly into our homes and lives.

Blessings,

Pastor Jim

Almighty and everlasting God, you have stooped to raise fallen humanity by the child-bearing of blessed Mary; grant that we who have seen your glory revealed in our human nature, and your love made perfect in our weakness, may daily be renewed in your image, and conformed to the pattern of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. —David Silk

O God of love and mercy, help us to understand our children as they grow in years and in knowledge of your world. Make us compassionate for their temptations and failures and encouraging in their seeking after truth and value for their lives. Stir in us appreciation of their ideals and sympathy for their frustrations; that with them we may look for a better world than either we or they have known, through Jesus Christ, our common Lord and Master. —Massy Hamilton Shepherd, Jr.