

Christmas Eve Meditation “On 2020”

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2020 has turned out to be a unique leap year. It had 29 days in February, 300 days in March and it's been 10 years since April. Who knew this year would be so exhausting . . .? It really is good that we don't know what's ahead of us. Even our church building feels like it has had the coronavirus right now because of our flood damage and repairs! But I think a nine-year-old from Michigan gave the best description of all of 2020. He said 2020 is: “Like looking both ways before crossing the street and then getting hit by a submarine.”

It's been a year of firsts.

For the first time we have a President who refuses to accept the results of an election and gracefully concede.

For the first time the entire nation appears to have woken up to the fact that black and brown people are being systemically discriminated against and killed.

For the first time we have a world-wide pandemic. The Spanish flu was widespread throughout the world, but it didn't get everywhere. The world wasn't as inter-connected in 1918 as it is now.

For the first time the entire world is working to vaccinate the entire world.

For the first time students have been out of school for months on end while parents struggle with childcare and teachers figure out how to teach online.

For the first time since the Great Depression our nation is facing economic disaster with the poor being disproportionately impacted. There are food lines, evictions and bankruptcies.

And for the first time the Russians have successfully infiltrated our national security computer network as well as that of private companies and nations around the world and we still have no idea the extent of the damage. We don't know what has been stolen or corrupted.

Oh, and killer bees. 2020 gave us them as well.

We may be tempted to think we're in the worst mess ever. But we're actually not. This year may be exceptional, but the world has been a mess for a very long time. It was a mess when Jesus was born. If there was a solution to the problem of evil that didn't involve exterminating the whole human race and starting over, I think God would have done it by now. Instead, God loved the world so much that God sent God's son, that whoever believes in him would not perish but have eternal life. And eternal life is not just really, really, really long life. Eternal life is restoration, wholeness, healing and forgiveness. And it comes through Jesus, because in order to fix human nature, God had to take on human nature. Jesus lived during a time when emperors refused to give up power and murdered their competition. He lived during a time of widespread disease, suffering and death. He experienced poverty and injustice. He was

racially discriminated against by the Romans who hated the Jews. He was a victim of political corruption and injustice, falsely arrested, tried and executed. Jesus knows all about our world.

This Christmas season in this uniquely challenging time let us join our hearts and minds together to resist the darkness. Christ has come. God has not given up on our world. We did not know what was ahead of us, but God did. This year we still don't know what's ahead, but we know what we are in the middle of. In the midst of devastating loss, God is still with us. Even when there is death, there is still eternal life. There is still hope. We know that good can triumph. We know because we have seen the Spirit of God work in our world too.

One day we will look back on 2020 and see things with greater clarity. It is always hard to see God when we are in the middle of a mess. It is when I look back, that I can see all of the ways God has intervened in my life and guided me. When I look back I can see the patterns, and recognize where God provided even in the darkest hours. When I look back I can see the hand of God at work opening doors and bringing people into my life. If we can't feel God with us today, we can KNOW for a fact that God is with us, because we have been this way before. Jesus truly does know what we are going through, and despite all that is going on in our world right now, God is still with us, yesterday, today and forever. Amen.