

# St John Church of Christ

December 8, 2019

## Coming in December

“’Tis the Season”

With the holidays upon us, many of our friends and neighbors are looking for a church to visit. Throughout the month of December, we will be sharing what the Bible has to say about the birth of Christ. You won't find little drummer boys or dancing cattle. The wisemen don't arrive until a year later, but you will hear the most amazing story of God's love. You'll learn about how "The Word" – Jesus' name before he came to earth – became human and lived among us, not only teaching us, but showing us what it means to be fully human as God intended. Be sure to invite a guest to come with you!

December 8

“Jesus through the eyes of the villagers”

December 15

“Jesus through the eyes of the shepherds”

December 22

“Jesus through the eyes of the wisemen”

December 29

### FAMILY FRIENDLY WORSHIP

In months with a 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday, we do something special. The entire family – old and young – are invited to stay and worship together.

## Cruel Christmas



There is a cruel side to Christmas. There it was under the tree: A Laser Blaster 2000! Nothing else mattered. You raced around the house gleefully saving the world from bug-eyed monsters from outer space, but then came that awful moment Christmas afternoon when you met your friends. You triumphantly held up your prize and pride, the Laser Blaster 2000, only to discover Billy got the Laser Blaster 3000 with battery powered flashing lights and realistic sound. The joy you felt a moment before was snuffed out and you began to feel – perhaps for the first time – the spark of envy.

By the time we become adults that little spark has become the raging fire of “conspicuous consumption.” We begin buying things we don't need to impress people we don't know. The desire to be the envy of others often leads

to overspending and consequent marital conflicts. (Arguments over money and spending is listed as one of the greatest causes of divorce in America.) “A convincing case can be made that the entire free enterprise system is fueled by envy,” Harry Stein writes in his book, *Ethics and Other Liabilities*.

Envy isn't just about material things. We envy successful people. We envy beautiful people. We envy powerful people and have you noticed the irony of it all? Envy someone causes them no inconvenience whatsoever. In fact, the object of our envy is likely to enjoy the envy of others! Stein continues, “No emotion is so corrosive of the system and the soul as acute envy” because, unlike hatred or lust or violent anger, it is internalized and there is nothing therapeutic about it. Envy can be debilitating to the point of paralysis and then there is the ugliness factor. It is nearly impossible to envy with style. Invariably we end up looking as small as we feel. In fact, at its base, envy is largely a matter of self-contempt – an intense dissatisfaction with what we are.

Anthony Campolo (*The Seven Deadly Sins*) observes, “Envy diminishes people's enjoyment of life because they cannot be content with what they possess.” A man who covets another man's wife becomes discontented with

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his own. A woman who envies another woman's sexy appearance becomes a supporter of a cultural system which diminishes her own value and encourages her own unhappiness.

Envy isn't just a sin of the world; I've seen it within the church. One minister is jealous of another staff member's success and his envy leads him to say and do all kinds of horrible and hurtful things. The story is told of the devil. Once Satan was crossing the desert and came across some of his minions trying unsuccessfully to tempt a poor Christian pilgrim. They were using every trick they knew – temptations of the flesh, doubts, fears – all to no avail. Satan smiled and asked them for a turn. The devil bent down and whispered in the man's ear, "Your brother has just been made the Bishop of Alexandria." The serene face of the pilgrim twisted into a scowl fueled by the fires of envy and jealousy.

So what can we do about envy? An attitude of gratitude can shield us. I like the wise observation, "If you think that the grass is greener on the other side of the fence; it is probably because you are not properly caring for the grass on your own side." When we count our blessings and are grateful for what God has given us, we are protected from envy. Likewise, learning to be happy for others is a mark of wisdom. Christians are urged to "Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep," (Romans 12:15). It's all part of learning to live unselfishly. Third, we need to "learn to let go." One of the greatest joys – and per-

haps one of the hardest challenges – is to give things away. How much do we really need to be happy? Finally, we need to commit to the common cause. The war we face is not with each other! We are in this world together.

Let's go back and change that Christmas afternoon scenario. "Billy, that Blaster 3000 is great! I am so happy for you. Now let's go save the world from bug-eyed monsters – together!"



## News & Notes

### Women's Christmas Dinner

There will be a Christmas gathering for the ladies on Sunday evening, December 15 at 6:30 P.M. at the home of Pam Turner. Soups will be provided. You are asked to bring a snack and a gift for the gift exchange (\$10-\$15).

### Wednesday Bible Studies

Wednesdays are special in St. John. Join us Wednesday afternoon at 2:00 for our community study of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Then, at 6:30 P.M., join us for dinner followed by a short devotional at 7:00 P.M. and classes for all ages until 8:00 P.M.

### Ladies' Bible Class Monday Night

You can be a part of the fun! Ladies, won't you join us tomorrow night, Monday, December 9<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 P.M.? We're studying Ecclesiastes. See Cheyenne or Joy for details.

### For Your Prayers

Please continue to remember little Jeremiah who had emergency surgery last week and his daddy, Jesse has been deployed for military training. Mom, Justeen, has her hands full!

This is a great time to invite our friends and neighbors to visit us during the holidays. Why not being praying for them now?

### Visit Our Website

<https://stjohnchurchofchrist.org>

Follow us on Facebook! Search for @StJohnChurchOfChrist to find us easily.

### A Thank You Note

Thank you so much for your generous donation to the Stafford County Care Community! This is such a wonderful program that is changing lives! Thank you for partnering with us as we build trust and relationships with those in need.

Teresa Miller  
St. John Core Community Coach

