

Memorize & Ponder

**Brentwood Presbyterian Church
December 29, 2013**

New Possibilities

**Revelation 21:1-4
(168, 171, 173, 180)**

That first Christmas was the beginning.
The Biblical stories and the carols inspired by them
are filled with light.

Listen to and consider the words
of the hymns we are singing today.
Recall your favourite Christmas carols
that we have sung in the last few weeks.
They are filled with themes of light illuminating the darkness.

That's what the church down through the ages
has celebrated immediately following Christmas –
the coming of the light.

And the light promises new possibilities.
It promises the possibilities of seeing things
differently,
more clearly,
more thoroughly,
more deeply,
more powerfully.

As we have mentioned previously,
one way of understanding the idea of 'redemption'
is to see it as a 're-seeing',
a new and different way of understanding things,
this time from God's perspective.

We learn to see things as God sees them.
We see the world with God's faith in his human creatures,
with God's hope for the future of his creation,
and with God's compassion for the flourishing of it all.

When we are 'redeemed' in that way,
when we are given the gift of God's sight,
when we are enlightened by God's Spirit,

we begin to see new possibilities
that are not apparent
when we are encased in the darkness of our fears and insecurities.

The darkness of our fears and insecurities
is usually stifling.
It constricts and cramps our abilities to express our gifts.
It raises doubts about our abilities.
It drains our capacities and confidence.
We seek false sources of light
to relieve the darkness,
knowing all the time at some deep level of our beings
that the only light that will open up new possibilities
is the light of God's love that we see in Jesus, the Christ.

I am convinced that we do have the capacity
to see and pursue and achieve new possibilities.
We have it because God has given it to us.
Indeed, God is nourishing that capacity to flourish
every moment of our lives,
filling us with the energy of the Holy Spirit
with every breath, with every pulse, with every new cell.

What new possibilities
are attracting your attention for 2014?
What new possibilities is the Holy Trinity
shining their light on for this coming year?
Are there different ways of seeing things
that would open up new possibilities
for your flourishing?
If you saw those things through God's forgiving and refreshing eyes,
what difference would it make to your confidence and capacity?

Those are challenging questions.
But they are life-giving questions.
They don't point to some superficial New Year's resolution
that gets dismissed a couple of weeks later.
They point to the new possibilities that emerge
when we walk into life with a deepened awareness
of God's presence with us and for us.
Those questions bring us into a deeper awareness
that we are not alone in this world,
but that we are accompanied every step of the way
by God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer.

So, God is opening up new possibilities for each and every one of you
as you enter 2014 with humble confidence
that God is with you,
that the promise of Emmanuel (meaning 'God with us') is true.

I also wanted to take a couple of minutes this morning
and reflect a bit on new possibilities for Brentwood.

This has been a good year, all things considered.

New people have found their church home with us.
New people have been nourished to flourish
in the grace of Jesus Christ
through our concerts and our Jazz Evensongs.
A new day care will be starting in our basement next week.
We bid a foun and regretful farewell to Hamida,
who was with us for 14 years.
We extend a warm welcome to Haideh, Asfan, and Paris
who are opening Petites Genies,
a French-immersion day care.

We took a serious look at the condition of our facilities
and discovered some new possibilities for improvements.
We will be opening up the discussions about these
over the next several weeks
as we prepare for our annual general meeting.
The major issues and possibilities
are pretty clear.

There are about \$300,000 worth of renovations needed
to put the building and grounds into excellent condition –
handicapped accessibility, new roof, renovated bathrooms,
new seating in a repainted sanctuary,
new double-glazed windows,
renovated kitchen with a commercial dishwasher,
redesigned landscaping and outside entrances,
and better signage.

We are also looking at a proposal
to redesign our website
to make it more interactive and inviting.
That is in response to those comments
At our congregational consultation in November
about making Brentwood better known in the neighbourhood.
We need to develop and explore others ideas
about advertising as well.

We are looking into the sale of a building lot
on the north side of our property
that would generate the money needed for these renovations
and put more money into our endowment fund.
We are also looking at repurposing the sanctuary
into a small arts venue suitable for concerts, plays, etc.
There might be sizable grants for this repurposing.

All these new possibilities
will require careful consideration and open consultation.
But they are exciting.
And we are doing them to spread the light of the Gospel
into the darkness of this world.
We are doing them all to nourish souls to flourish
in the grace of Jesus Christ.

You see, the new heaven and the new earth
that John speaks of so passionately
in our final Memorize and Ponder passage for 2013
is not something that will happen in the future,
at the end of time.
It began to happen in earnest that first Christmas,
when the Light took flesh and dwelt among us,
began again to walk with us on the earth.
We build that new heaven and new earth
one act of compassion after another.
We build that new heaven and that new earth
as we renovate space where Jesus, the Christ,
can encounter people and transform them by his grace.

What new possibilities can you, with God's guidance, imagine
that would enhance the work of this church?

Give it some thought this week and let us know.

*May God fill us all with the Spirit of LAFter as we enter 2014,
with the joy of love, aspiration, and faith that we see in Jesus, the Christ,
and let us go forth this week to bless the world.*

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