

REMEMBER

by Rev. Todd Farnsworth

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TODD (FROM PULPIT): Whew! We finally made it. It's Christmas Eve 2019 and we made it! Give yourselves a round of applause!!! It's been a tough haul, but we got here. How you holding up? You OK? Not so OK? It's been a busy season full of work and parties and cards and gifts and broken water pipes and getting cut off in traffic and running out of food and wondering if our heat will come up to speed

and don't even get me started about all the shenanigans in Washington DC! We've had surprise visitors and hugs and laughter and tears. Folks have been struggling with family and illness, travel and grief.

We've got lists for our lists of things to do before Christmas day! We're coming to the end of those lists but,

It's a lot to pile up on top of the holiday!

It's been really hectic for a lot of folks, up to now...but tonight...tonight is for chilling...for relaxing...for recovering and remembering the reason we got so worked up this season.

Can you remember what it's all about?

Let's start decompressing with a little primer on the holiday: Let's join

together in singing hymn 165, Once in Royal David's City...

165, ONCE IN DAVID'S ROYAL CITY (vss 1,2)

ANGEL (from a ladder)

Wahoo, looks like I'm getting up in the world! But here's where it started...with an angel. Or maybe it was a flock of angels (the Twitters of their day!). Short, pithy messages got sent out to particular and global recipients alike. They were all under 140 characters back then, imagine that!

DO NOT BE AFRAID.

THE SPIRIT IS UPON YOU.

A CHILD WILL BE BORN.

CALL HIM, EMMANUEL, GOD WITH US!

Boy, those were tweets I'd like to receive...not like a lot of the stuff you see online today! Remember?

GREETINGS! YOU WHO ARE HIGHLY FAVORED!

THE LORD IS WITH YOU!

NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE WITH GOD!

The angels used *their* "tweets" to bring words of hope and Good news to the people.

I like to imagine the angels flapping their wings and singing their songs, and it helps me remember that those messages are for ME and you, too.

DO NOT BE AFRAID.

A CHILD WILL BE BORN.

NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE WITH GOD!

Yes indeed, I remember those: ANGELS WE HAVE HEARD ON HIGH!

Hymn 155, Vss 1 and 3.

SHEPHERDS/(from next to piano): And then there were the shepherds; those blue-collar workers out in the field, earning their keep through manual labor; doing the dirty jobs that the rich folks didn't want to do--changing their oil, cleaning their bathrooms, tending the lawns, mucking the barns and plowing the driveways...it wasn't glamorous, but it paid a few bills.

I say, "a few bills" because back then, like now, manual labor was not valued as highly as "office work." You needed to know someone, or be related to someone to make it big...to earn enough to make ends meet. I tell you, it felt like a trap. Folks were trapped by money. Trapped by status.

Trapped by who our mom and dad were in the community...or the perception folks had about them.

It was pretty disheartening.

It is pretty disheartening still, to a lot of folks today.

But I remember that 2000 years ago God smiled upon those dirty fingernails and untamed beards. God smiled and extended a personal invitation to something...no, to *someone*, who could set us free from our cultural bondage. This *someone* saw us from a different perspective.

The heavens said to us: *Fear not, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord!*

If God was offering hope to a bunch of shepherds, things have to be able to change for the better for us, right? Let's reflect on that as we sing

151, THE FIRST NOEL (vss 1, 2)

MAGI: (By Christmas tree. Looking up at star?)

MAGI: And at the other end of the socioeconomic spectrum there were the Magi, lots of Magi; wise men and wise women bumping into each other as they journeyed over the sands.

I recall there were mountains...

...and river's to get across...

following yonder star! (point up)

There was a tyrant king who was suspicious of anyone who challenged his sovereignty, and there was political red tape!

If it wasn't one special interest group it was another. They all wanted change, but no one was willing to accept the consequences; or budge a little so that everyone might move a bit...

The magi watched for a rising star in every political party and in every military campaign.

Despite their science and technology, there were too many mysteries that defied their understanding. They believed God's promise to send us a

source of peace and reconciliation, and they kept on watching...
The ancients had told of One who would save us from each other...
and ourselves.

(laughing): We were like naughty little children, (we still are!), shooting
spitballs at one another...or worse.

And it took a child to save us!

A very good child.

A rising star, born under a star on the rise.

He changed our focus.

He instructed our hearts.

He called us to a new way, that leads us to eternal life.

He was definitely worth the wait.

mm, hm! I remember. He was definitely worth the wait!

172, WE THREE KINGS (vss 1,5)

Sooo, that's it. I think we remembered it all. On one side of the season we've got God in the heavens calling out "Good News is coming!" and on the other side of the season we've got the poorest of poor and the riches of rich and all the people in between hearing that Good News.

Check...and check. I think that's it...right? I didn't forget anything, did I?

(Congregation reminds me of the manger, mary joseph, Jesus)

Ohhhh, the manger! Mary, Joseph, Jesus! Right. And what happened up there?

Show me.

Yes, the Good News came to us. Will somebody show me what it looked like?

(Volunteer begins to rock the child gently)

Ah yes. There it is. (tossing list aside) Now I remember.

Christmas isn't about all of our lists, it's about holding onto this child... and letting him hold us back.

It's about tending to one another, comforting one another, loving one another.

Now I remember.

I hope you do, too.

Let's pass on this precious memory as we sing **Hymn 145, Silent Night.**

