



GEORGE STREET UNITED CHURCH

25 Buchanan Street, St. John's, NL, A1C 0A4



When Herod say that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under,

--Matthew 2: 16

January 8, 2021

To the Saints of the George Street Pastoral Charge,

I probably could have selected a more uplifting and inspiring message to start the year. I probably could have. I chose not to. I chose not to on the grounds that denial helps nobody, least of all those who are in denial. To look the other way would be an abdication of the role of shepherd given to me by this congregation we inhabit and the denomination we belong to.

I am going to be political. I am not going to be partisan. At least not partisan in an earthly sense. Left and Right have their own flaws. I'm aiming at heaven and earth partisanship which will ultimately influence Left and Right as foundational starting points.

Earth can offer nothing more than it has constantly for thousands of years. It whispers death and destruction and promises power over others. It encourages us to be suspicious of others and it enables us to easily diminish others created in the image and likeness of God. Left and Right fall prey to that lure easily. Primarily because it is a simpler and easier way. It literally is the broad path to destruction that Jesus warned against.

Heaven offers something much more as it has continuously promised since Creation in the beginning. And it is here that we are served by the observation of G.K. Chesterton, "The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult; and left untried." The narrow path that Jesus calls us to follow him on is ultimately one of sacrifice and it may lead to a loss of life if followed faithfully. This narrow path is marked by the way that we, who are called to walk it, are also encouraged to lay down our lives for others.

If we were called to die heroically in a monumental battle, we would probably find courage enough to go and get it over with quickly. We wrestle not with flesh and blood so our struggle will not be as easy as that. No, we are called to the long and upward task like Sisyphus of mythology, pushing a boulder uphill all day only to have it roll back down to the bottom of the hill at night while we rest.

Near the end of Matthew's Gospel, we read of a Shepherd separating sheep



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from goats. Both, it turns out are just as ignorant at spotting the Shepherd in a crowd as the other. So, there is no difference in intelligence between sheep or goat. Both are separated by their compassion on their neighbours. Sheep, according to the parable, do not fail to exercise compassion and kindness. They see the hungry and they feed them. They see the thirsty and they give them to drink. They see those sick and in prison and they visit them. Goats do none of this, goats find the hungry, thirsty and the lonely undeserving of their attention.

As 2021 opens and we find ourselves not greatly improved upon 2020 let us challenge ourselves to become more, sheeply. Even if we cannot feed all the hungry, give drink to all the thirsty, visit all who are sick or in prison we can begin with one and we can do that without an eye to promised reward. We can do it simply because it is the right thing to do.

If that is the foundational promise that we make for ourselves in 2021 we may never complete the job. We at the very least can say, "as difficult as the Christian ideal may be we did not leave it untried."

Jesus gives us blue-print in loving God with all of our heart, and strength, and soul, and mind, as well as, loving our neighbours as we love ourselves. Let us start there and see if God keeps God's promises or not.

A new year lies before us, none are promised tomorrow so the time must be now.

Your Servant in Christ Jesus,

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