

Every week we come into the sanctuary for a reason. Many of you have been coming here to this very place for years. Sunday after Sunday you have followed the habits and traditions of all people of faith through the years – going back thousands of years. Listen to some words of a Psalm:

“Praise the LORD! How good it is to sing praises to our God; for He is gracious, and a song of praise is fitting” (Ps 147:1).

We gather to sing praises to God because we think something happens. The Psalmist continues:

“... the LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love” . . . “He heals the brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds” . . . “The LORD lifts up the downtrodden; he casts the wicked to the ground” (vs. 11, 3, 6).

So we come expectantly, knowing God hears, and that God is here. We know that God responds to those who seek Him.

We even gather not only to sing to God but also to hear a sermon. A leader of the Reformation in Zurich, Switzerland wrote a confession. In it Rev. Bullinger wrote, “The preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God” (5.004, “Second Helvetic Confession,” *Book of Confessions*).

So when you come to this gathering, when you listen to the sermon and the Bible is preached, God uses the words in the sermon to speak to you, and to me.

We all long to hear that voice from God.

So today as we come on this Christmas Day, as we once again gather, be encouraged that God speaks to you, at this particular hour, on this special day. You can trust God to speak.

This gathering is not random. The Bible says,

“The mighty one, God the Lord, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting” (Ps. 50:1).

That fact continues today. God looks down to hear us; He listens to our prayers; God is near to us and watches over us. He is on our side to help us. (118:7)

I asked the staff where they had seen God at work among you this year. Their comments are written in your bulletin, but here are some highlights.

Andrew:

- Ministry to the children (a member) brings to church as they grow in faith and understanding of the Gospel
- When the choir’s music illuminates the Word
- When the session, ministry teams, and staff consistently make wise decisions that further the purpose of this church
- The congregation worships through song

Deborah:

- God is and will work wonders in FPCD because you have trusted in God and have followed Him wholeheartedly

Sandy:

- Through FPCD's striving to share the Good News through special worship and storytelling events, the Angel Tree, and Austin Street Shelter
- Through members care of the facilities and staff

Steve:

- Through the youth asking difficult questions because he knows that these questions are sparked by God wooing these young people to Himself.

Ginger:

- You are risking ministry in many areas to reach out beyond the walls of this church.

Sean:

- The most tragic and frightening day of his life led to his experiencing God's love through this congregation, friends, and family as he could have never imagined.

We must remember that we have experienced a miracle this year, certainly a sign of God's presence with us.

So what does God have to say to us today?

"Do not be afraid. For see – I am bringing you good news of great joy for all people" (Lk 2:10).

"He is a mighty Savior and comes to us because God has looked favorably on His people and redeemed them" (Lk 1:68).

It's a promise God has made and kept. (v. 70)

The promise overcomes all our enemies (v. 74), not just visible enemies but those enemies of doubt and godlessness.

So we are in a good place. We may serve God without fear. Our faith leads not to discouragement and emptiness, but to great hope and a bright future.

Merry Christmas church! For unto you has been given a Savior. Love Him! He is Christ the Lord.

King David said, "Happy are the people to whom such blessings fall; happy are the people whose God is the LORD" (Ps. 144:15).

AMEN