

REFLECTION: “New Beginnings”

Do you know what day tomorrow is?

That’s right, it’s new year’s day. It’s the first day of 2024.

It’s a new year, a new beginning.

Do you know what else tomorrow is?

Those are all really good guesses, but I don’t think you are going to be able to guess the thing that I had in mind. A long time ago, when I was much younger, a doctor came to me and said, unto you a child is born. That’s what he said. 38 years ago tomorrow my daughter was born, so that makes tomorrow her birthday. It’s a new year for her, a new beginning.

Do you know what happens when babies are born?

All of those things happen. Babies change your whole life. After a baby is born, nothing is ever the same as it was before. New parents don’t get to sleep all night anymore, they don’t get to eat their supper while it is hot anymore, and everything they do, they have to think about the baby, and what the baby needs. It’s a new beginning.

What else can change your life?

Yes, and tornadoes, and floods, and bullies, and friends, and lots of other things change our lives too. But babies do something that armies and big companies and earthquakes can’t do.

Babies create a future; they give birth to hope.

Whose birthday did we celebrate last Monday?

That’s right. Last Monday was Christmas day, the day we celebrate the birth of Jesus. He was born in a stable, to an ordinary couple, more than two thousand years ago. He was wrapped in strips of cloth, usually used for burial, and laid in a feed trough. He was given gifts of gold, frankincense, a spice mixed with other things

and burned in the temple to smell nice and carry prayers up to God, also a hallucinogenic, mixed with wine and given to people so they don't feel pain.... like when they are hanging on a cross, and myrrh, a perfume used for healing, for anointing a man when he becomes king, *or for anointing the dead before burial.*

Today we read the story of the baby Jesus being taken to the temple when he was only a month old. When Mary and Joseph and Jesus were there at the temple they met two old people, Simeon and Anna. Simeon and Anna worshipped God and prayed at the temple every day. They were waiting for a Messiah. Do you know what Messiah means? It means 'God's anointed' or God's chosen one. It would be kind of like being a parent's favourite child because you always make the parent happy by doing the things the parent wants you to do. So Simeon and Anna were waiting for a baby to be born who would do what God wanted done, and by doing what God wanted there would be a new beginning for Israel. Simeon and Anna were waiting for a new beginning for Israel, and Jesus was the one who was going to make that new beginning happen.

Do you think the world needs a new beginning now? Me too.
Do you think DUC needs a new beginning now? Me too.

How do you think that new beginning will happen? Those are all really good ideas. I think that if we let Jesus' love be born in our hearts; if everything we say, every decision we make, everything we do is what God would have us say, and decide, and do, then we will reflect God's grace. And if we always reflect God's grace, there will be a new beginning: a new beginning in our lives, a new beginning in our churches and in our pastoral charge, a new beginning in our community, and a new beginning in our world.

The truth of Jesus' love for all people still shines today: a light for all people. And like the warmth that radiates from a flame, the grace of God radiates from the light of Jesus' love for us, creating new beginnings over and over again. Rejoice, for unto us a child is born, and we shall call him role model, teacher, friend, and giver of new beginnings. Amen.