

The Christ Candle – Rob and Phyllis Clemmer

Rob: We light the Christ Candle, please hear the word of our Lord from Isaiah 9 2-7.

(Phyllis lights the candle as Rob reads)

Our scripture reading is from Isaiah 9; verses 2-7

<sup>2</sup> The people walking in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
on those living in the land of deep darkness  
a light has dawned.

<sup>3</sup> You have enlarged the nation  
and increased their joy;  
they rejoice before you  
as people rejoice at the harvest,  
as warriors rejoice  
when dividing the plunder.

<sup>4</sup> For as in the day of Midian's defeat,  
you have shattered  
the yoke that burdens them,  
the bar across their shoulders,  
the rod of their oppressor.

<sup>5</sup> Every warrior's boot used in battle  
and every garment rolled in blood  
will be destined for burning,  
will be fuel for the fire.

<sup>6</sup> For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.

And he will be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

<sup>7</sup> Of the greatness of his government and peace  
there will be no end.

He will reign on David's throne  
and over his kingdom,  
establishing and upholding it  
with justice and righteousness  
from that time on and forever.

The zeal of the LORD Almighty  
will accomplish this.

The word of the Lord (wait for congregation to say “Thanks be to God” and then continue.

Over 50 years ago, Phyllis and I sat in the balcony of this church and rather than thinking about the worship, we were thinking about our future together. Who would have guessed that after my years of my being a High school principal, and Phyllis’ years of working with the schools’ personnel and media, that would end up back here. For many years, we lived in Winston-Salem with its vast opportunities. We attended a large church where Phyllis was a deacon and where we sang in the choir. But something drew us back to the mountains. And every time we visited the church where we once dreamed of a future in the balcony, we saw a wonderful congregation that was genuine to the core. So, we started coming up to Banner Elk on Wednesdays for choir practice, would spend the night, and then get up at 4 AM to return to Winston and work. Then Friday afternoon came and we returned to the mountains, then back to Winston Sunday afternoon.

Eventually we knew our home was here. It took a while (we slept for a week on an air mattress) but slowly and surely, we made the transition. And then bit by bit we closed the circle and permanently returned to the church where we once sat in the balcony.

I was asked to help the church part time; and this grew into the full time position I have today as Office Administrator. At times the job is daunting as I take calls from people in need who are desperate for food. At times the job is consuming as I try to ensure that the church is running smoothly. But at all times, the job is fulfilling as I can be of service to so many. Phyllis is heavily involved in most all the activities as well and that gives us an advantage; we can see the beautiful workings of a church that truly serves our Lord.

Phyllis: So, when we came up here, Rob was going to “slow down;” that was the plan. He has a difficult time with that, however. And then the heart surgeon told him he was surprised Rob had lived this long. Rob had already lost three brothers, so this was a piece of information that was not to be ignored.

As we get older, we all face these decisions. Our bodies tell us it is time to transition into new territory and we sometimes we go there with reluctance. As Rob and I face new transitions, our hope is to seek out God’s truth in new ways. One of the beauties of getting older is to find adventurous ways to serve Jesus Christ.

All of you are here with your own story. We are all transitioning into new territory no matter what age we are. And we all must seek out new truths as we mature as Christians. So, we light the candle and ask the question, “What about this night; the night before the birth of our Lord” is new and different in our minds? And what can we do to venture into the vast and beautiful world set before us by Jesus Christ.

Let us pray:

Dear Father in heaven. We thank you for the birth of your son, Jesus Christ. And we ask you to help us discover new ways of serving Him. We look forward to the new paths you set before us. We look back to the night our Lord was born and are humbled by the history and spiritual magnificence of that event. Help us to keep that in mind as we seek to serve you and to better understand our place in your beautiful world.