



*“Grumping Our
Way to Christmas”
Matthew 1:18-25
Advent 4
Dec. 23, 2007
Rev. Shelley Lavenne*

When I was growing up, a special treat was to watch the movie, *A Christmas Carol*. I think my Dad particularly liked one phrase of Ebenezer Scrooge. “Ba hum bug.” It’s around this time in the Advent Season, in fact perhaps earlier, he would start saying this phrase.

Forget that he was a minister – putting out services extolling the love of God, the joy of following Christ, the peace that we know in the life lived in the Holy Spirit. “Ba hum bug,” he would grump.

It was early this week that I found myself doing a similar “grump.” I didn’t say those words ‘ba hum bug’ but I felt them. It could have been that we had done the sixth of the 10 worship services we will do this month and there were still four more to do. It could be all that 2-year old debris of toys that get strewn through the house and each day there seems to be less time to get it cleaned up. It could have to do that none of the Christmas cards were sent yet. It could have to do with my brother emailing that their gifts to us were all ready and wrapped before last Tuesday night. And ours to them certainly weren’t wrapped, let alone all of them purchased yet.

On Tuesday – if I’d had any control over canceling Christmas – I would have been doing that.

It reminds me of the premise behind the Tim Allan movie *Christmas with the Kranks* where the husband decides to cancel Christmas. He and his wife will go away and avoid the whole expense. But as much as they try, they can’t avoid the trappings around Christmas. The gift-giving, the expensive decorations and lavish parties are so much a part of the culture of their workplace, their friendships and their family relationships – that they can’t avoid it.

I think I would love Christmas, if it were simply about worshipping God incarnate. God come down to earth. Not a God way up there. Not an imagined God. But this real God we know who lives— real enough that our God chooses to live among us and be with us. This God among us – who knows us each so well that He knows the number of hairs on our head, the lines on our hands, our thoughts before we speak them. This God who loves us more than we can possibly imagine.

If Christmas was simply about celebrating Emmanuel – God with us, then perhaps I wouldn't be grumbling. But it's not, is it? It's a lot of extra things added to our "to do" lists. And credit card bills we're scared to look at. So many things to do, so many customs to abide with -- that have nothing to do with the religious holiday. And I don't know about you but my fuse gets short. It becomes much easier to get angry, to snap at someone – the child who isn't doing what they were told to do for the third or fifth time. Or the church member who lets you know they can't do the task they'd volunteered to do. The person on the other end of the telephone that says according to the computer, Sears never got the order you made online.

And yet, hey wait a minute. God incarnate. God with us. Doesn't part of this doctrine mean that God is in each of us? Christ is in each of us. In each one of you. You bear Christ. We just baptized little Baby Thomas but we know our actions were symbolic that he is already of God. We're told to look for Christ in each person we meet.

And yet all the stress these cultural trappings around Christmas are causing me to want to tear a strip off several of these Godly people.

When we find ourselves going over the proverbial 'edge', that's the time to come back to God. Funny, how a holiday that is supposed to be all about God – can lead us to some dark places – anger for no reason except stress, spending too much, too many things to do that we're distracted from God and distracted to the blessings of people God has put in our midst.

But then that's how darkness works, doesn't it? We are Christians who are to keep our eyes on the light of God. That is our hope. Our salvation. It is the light of God that is our home. And yet dark shadows can so easily lure us away.

Our religion is a realistic one and it knows all about shadows. We are given a beautiful gift in this Christ child. And yet in some 30 years, this wonderful gift who came to tell us about the love of God, will be killed. Friends, religious leaders of the

time will plot his demise. And for what reasons? Shadowy reasons – greed, because Christ challenged customs of the time, asked that they centre themselves in God.

This Christmas, this holiday season we're heading into – it's all about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit. Let's centre ourselves on God and the goodness of God we know in each other. Let's centre ourselves in the peace, hope, joy and love we know in Christ. And all the rest – let's put it into its proper perspective in our hearts and minds.