

**“Behold the Lamb of God”
Sermon Preached by Lowell D. Nelson
American Lutheran Church of Sun City**

Grace and peace be to you on this precious day, the Lord with us, Emmanuel, God in the flesh, in the form, the beautiful form of a baby. A sign of hope in every generation, a precious baby, uniting families, uniting the hope for the future. I give thanks to a God who delivers the sign of such great love and affinity for his people in the sign of a precious, precious baby.

It is amazing how God uses all types of circumstances to proclaim his love, including a census. We have just gone through a census in our own country, and the importance of a census is to make sure that we know how many people we have, how to allocate resources, how to make sure that we account and take care of one another. It was done in this time to bring order to a very diverse and spread-out Roman society. You had to go to your home, in your home line. I just think about that, this precious pandemic time that we are in, precious in the sense that people are making decisions whether to return home or not to, and I just ask for God’s blessing upon every family in this regards that there is a sign of love, whether using technology, or in the person, and may God protect as we gather because it is all about the love that we have. That desire to be with those we love.

This great gift of a child is given in such a unique way, to such a humble couple. The humility of being born in a manger placed. This is the God self-giving love, this is a God who descends to us, a God worthy of all praise and honor, but a God whose love is in this precious baby. This is God’s love. God’s love has that opportunity for us to respond. Hearing this good news was a jolt to the shepherds. Here they are, away from Bethlehem, out in the fields, and the term pastoral comes from shepherds. Pastors are shepherds, humble, God willing, because the flock needs love and care and support. I give thanks for God’s gift to me to love this congregation and your love for one another. To hear this message of incredible joy, and of course, it is a typical biblical response of being afraid, but God’s comfort “Do not be afraid, I am bringing you good news.”

The theme for today with the song we just heard “Behold the Lamb of God.” My encouragement for this Christmas is to take hold. Some of us are a little bit nervous in holding a baby. I kind of forgotten how, you know that first time. What do I do? Perhaps you have seen fathers stumble in that way. Our oldest son was born and stayed in the neonatal intensive care unit for his first six days. It was kind of an intimidating place, and I was kind of afraid. Debbie was recovering. As you know, another child Jordan, his twin, so Debbie attended to Jordan and I attended to Andrew. I didn’t really know what to do. There was a nurse, I don’t know her name, but my nickname for her is “Sarge.” Because she said, “Get into it. Hold your baby. I don’t care if there

are things going off on him, monitors and stuff, hold your baby.” Then learning how to change Andrew, hahaha, I didn’t know what to do. Sarge didn’t take care of any of that, and it just got me to take hold of that baby. By the time that I reunited with Debbie, and I started doing the diaper changes, I think she was quite impressed. I knew how to do it because Sarge had told me.

I don’t want to be your Sarge, but I am going to be your pastor and say, “Take hold of the Christ Child”, not at a distance, not at some superficial picture in a store. Take hold of the living God and this precious baby. Take hold – it is a wonderful world, to see and to participate, to perceive; but it is an invitation to seeing clearly, to take hold. Maybe I can say it this way, hold on to the Christ Child, this precious child, because this is good news. The phrase continues of great joy. God with us in the Christ Child is a statement of God’s love for us. There is no greater superlative to say that God’s love for us in the flesh provides a sense of joy and comfort for our life.

We, as people of faith, we call this moment of God’s promises being made true. We hold on to God’s promise to return. In the midst we hold on to the promises of God, fully delivered in the birth of this child, and fully awaited in Christ’s coming again. Great news, good news, of great joy for all the people. This message is for everyone to take hold of the living God, to hold Christ close to your heart.

It is such a strange time, I mean the holidays themselves create stress, don’t they? For those of you working, you have to work harder to take time off. There are all the pressures of the expressions of love and presents can nearly bankrupt some people. That’s not the point of this, is it? It’s the expression of love, to take hold of God’s love and not to do anything less than singing the proclamation of God’s love.

This final encouragement to take hold of the Christ Child, to behold, to take hold, behold the Lamb of God, this precious child, growing into maturity, to give his life after teaching us the way of the Lord, to give his life for us. The absolute power of God’s grace flowing through the cross, and the culmination of faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ; all part of our faith story. Don’t forget the promise made in the birth of this child.

I think our response for this Christmas season, even in the midst of pandemic concerns is the same, it is the unification of heaven and earth, God’s rule over all. Glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth peace among those whom he favors. That is you and me in this world. God’s love is for this world. I just ask for this precious blessing that when we take hold of God’s love, place it in our hearts, place it in our confidence that God keeps promises, that place it in our future of God’s return again through Jesus Christ. There is a sense of peace. May you be filled with this peace as you take hold of the love of God and Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God!