

AN ADVENT WALK THROUGH THE KERYGMA

A guy falls into a hole.

I am captured, but I am not doomed. I am in need of something more...

The reality of our world is that it is broken, and we are trapped in a cycle of sin and death. Despite our very best intentions and efforts, we cannot break this cycle on our own. Whatever analogy we wish to use, stuck in a room without doors or windows, shackled with unbreakable chains, or down a hole too deep to climb out of, we are in need of help from the outside. We need a rescuer.

One of my favorite scenes in the TV show *The West Wing* comes in the Christmas episode *Noël*, which aired 24 years ago this week. Joshua is suffering from PTSD, and though he cannot see it himself, all of his friends are aware and trying to help him. At the end of the episode, after a bit of a breakthrough with a therapist, Joshua's friend and boss Leo shares this story.

This guy's walking down a street when he falls in a hole. The walls are so steep, he can't get out. A doctor passes by, and the guy shouts up, "Hey you, can you help me out?" The doctor writes a prescription, throws it down in the hole and moves on. Then a priest comes along, and the guy shouts up "Father, I'm down in this hole, can you help me out?" The priest writes out a prayer, throws it down in the hole and moves on. Then a friend walks by. "Hey Joe, it's me, can you help me out?" And the friend jumps in the hole. Our guy says, "Are you stupid? Now we're both down here." The friend says, "Yeah, but I've been down here before, and I know the way out."

The irony of the story is that while the doctor's prescription will help with some things, it won't get the guy out of the hole. As a people of faith, we know the power and importance of prayer. But to get out of this particular hole, we need a friend to jump in with us. We celebrate his birth in 10 days.

“For God so loved the world.”

The God who created us out of love and for love does not leave us trapped. God enters into our existence to rescue us. And Jesus is the friend who jumps into the hole.

But we must further understand that Jesus doesn't simply show us the way out, like it is some hidden passage we cannot find. His very body becomes the way out. When speaking of creation, we used the Stephen Covey phrase “begin with the end in mind.” It may be disturbing to think of at Christmas time, but our celebration of the innocent Christ-child lying in the manger is the beginning; his Passion, Death, and Resurrection are the means to our rescue. It's Jesus' end with us in mind.

Jesus in the manger is God literally jumping into the hole with us, jumping into our human condition. In seeing through the suffering and death at the cross, Jesus creates a door in a doorless room, a fracture in an unbreakable chain, and makes the all-too-deep hole only knee-deep. And what is the cost to us for this incredible gift? Simply put, it's a relationship.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.

John 3:16-17

We are created out of love and for love, first and foremost, the love of God. Though the phrase is “who believes in him,” honestly believing in Jesus means to be in love with him. Just like spending time talking with and being with our loved ones is a part of our relationship with them, we build a relationship with Jesus by speaking with and spending time with him. In that relationship with him, we join his body, the Body of Christ. In the Body of Christ, we step out of the knee-deep hole made so by His passion and death and enjoy the fruits of His resurrection. However, a relationship is built on the action of two parties working together; a loving relationship is not forced or one-sided.

It is in a relationship that we are **RESCUED**; how will we **RESPOND**?

Dear friends, we have one more week to journey together and a lifetime to respond.
In Christ's Love, Deacon Todd