Five Golden Rings

Matthew 28:18-20 December 29 2024

Matthew 1:18-25 Kimby Young

I have to confess. I’m always a little silly right after Christmas. It’s probably all the food and family and music and joy and laughter. Today it might also be honoring Alice, and the legacy of music here in this church. Today it might be having one combined service and overlapping in the pews, with a few extra family members and college students thrown in that we might not always get to see. It’s a wonderful, relaxed, happy and holy day. So you will have to forgive a little silliness in my sermon today.

The sermon title comes, as you might have guessed, as I mentioned in the children’s time. The sermon title comes from the song the twelve days of Christmas. Today is the 5th day of Christmas. And you may remember that in the song, that’s where we all slow down dramatically and sing loudly “5 golden rings” – as if that is the greatest of the gifts our true love might bring to us. Sing it with me now. “5 golden rings.”

As I mentioned in the children’s time this song was written to remind Christians of the most important things in our faith. Each stanza is one particular faith point. All the 12 together remind us of all that God has given us in Jesus Christ – our one true and greatest love.

The five golden rings originally stood for the first 5 books of the Bible – the Pentateuch – which are considered to hold the torah or the law of God – all of God’s gifts and God’s grace for us.

I started thinking about what we might write in a modern version about the core beliefs of our faith. What is most important to remember? Then I started to narrow it down and think what is the most important message of this season of the year. And even narrower still, on this fifth day of Christmas – what would I include as the most important elements of this season of Christmas. On this Golden day with Golden rings, what are the five golden, treasured elements of Christmas – what has our true love Jesus Christ given us to think about today.

I realize everyone might have a different list of five or twelve or whatever – if you wrote your own song for Christmas. So I invite you today during the sermon or later in the day or the week, to choose your own favorites of the season – what is the real focus of Christmas? What is most important to remember for our faithfulness? Here are my five golden rings given by our true love. Feel free to come up with your own.

First, Jesus was born. The Word became flesh. God came to be with us in human form. Emmanuel. God with us. The incarnation – the enfleshment of God – is absolutely central to my faith always and my thanksgiving this season. I love Christmas because it reminds us how much God loves us – all of us. Christmas reminds us how far God would go to save us – even to being born in human flesh and living a fully human life among us. Jesus came to teach us what love looks like. God came, in the flesh, even to die for us on a cross, so that we might have eternal life. This is the good news of great joy which shall be for all people. Jesus is God with us.

Second ring, second blessing. This coming to be with us, was not for just one day. Not even only for twelve days. Christmas continues. Christmas continues every single day, for all of our lives, for all of eternity. The blessing of Emmanuel, God with us, the Word made flesh is that it continues forever. Because of Jesus, God is with us forever. The second reading from Matthew – the last chapter of Matthew – the great commission – reminds us that this “God with us” promised in chapter one of the gospel is promised for eternity through the love of God in Jesus Christ. “I will be with you always, even to the ends of the age.” We should celebrate Christmas every single day. We should share the joy, love, peace and promise of Christmas all year round. Because the truth never ends – the truth of Christ’s love and God’s presence with us.

My third blessing to remember this season. The birth of Jesus changed the world. But this birth leads inevitably to Jesus death on a cross. Jesus was born in order to die in order to conquer sin. Jesus died in order to conquer death and offer resurrection. Because Jesus was born, Christ opened the way to resurrection and eternal life. We don’t always think about the cross and resurrection during the season of Christmas. The salvation Jesus offers is central to our faith this holy season, and always.

Fourth, the birth of Jesus reminds us of the life of Jesus. Jesus came to teach us how to live, how to love, how to share life, how to care for others. We are called to live as Jesus lived, not just over the holidays, but always. Love as Jesus loved.

And finally my fifth golden ring – share the good news. Tell others about Jesus. Show others what love looks like. Introduce other people to Jesus. Invite others into the presence of God. Tell the story of God’s love in Jesus Christ our Savior. You have heard the story. You have received the gifts of God. Our final golden ring is to be generous with all we have been given. Share. Care. Love. Live in the light. Go and tell about Jesus Christ our Savior born to offer life to all the world.

I will admit my five golden rings don’t sing quite as musically as the original song. But that’s no reason to keep from singing. I invite you to sing of your faith, to sing of God’s love, to sing of Jesus our one true love, to sing of all God’s gifts given, and to invite others to sing along.

Friends, children of God, beloved of Christ, let us sing to the glory of God. Go tell it and share God’s love in Jesus Christ, born to save and give us life eternal.

Thanks be to God.

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Matthew 1:18- 23

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: “Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us.”

Matthew 28:18-20

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

The Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God