

Christmas Day

Titus 3:4-7

Titus was a Gentile Christian who traveled with Paul and was greatly trusted by the apostle. We know this because Titus was sometimes an emissary to churches for Paul and this letter was written to Titus by Paul after the latter left Titus in Crete to do ministry there. Titus was to help the young church establish its leadership and learn the character demands of church leadership. The babes in faith were to grow into Christians. In today's lesson, Paul continues his instruction of Titus by explaining why Christians can live differently and by different standards than the world.

Paul begins this section by saying that the Christians in the Cretan church were once like the world, but "when the kindness of God our Savior and *His* love for mankind appeared, He saved us..." Then Paul shares the really good news, a reminder to us, to Titus, and to Titus' flock.

God does not save us because we have left the old life behind and become different from the world. He does not save us because we have come to our senses and changed our attitudes. We have not finally managed to "pull ourselves up by our bootstraps" as the world might say. God has sent His Son to be our Savior "because of His mercy." It is not by our intelligence that we come into a new life and a new attitude, nor is it by our own determination. It is God who has washed us by His Son's blood and renewed us through the Holy Spirit whom He has sent through His Son to fill our lives with guidance and power.

Today, as we celebrate the coming of Jesus into our world, we see Him as a babe in a manger, being watched over by Mary and Joseph; visited by shepherds still trembling from their astounding visit by a host of angels. We sing songs and read stories about the quiet night and the animals looking upon the one who was their Lord and Creator as well as ours. And, this day we also celebrate the new life that Jesus gives to us. Like the Cretan Christians, we now set out to live a new year, knowing that it is this babe who makes it possible for us to do "all things." (Phil.4:13)

Learn more about God's mercy and love in a Bible study this week.

A message from your Iowa District West Education Committee

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Titus 3:4-7

1. When did the "kindness and love of God our Savior" appear? Why is this text appropriate for this Christmas Day?
2. When did God's saving act become personally and powerfully ours? (vs. 5)
3. According to vs. 6, what is the best Christmas present ever? When will we open this special gift?

For Family Reflection

4. Did you deserve your Christmas presents? Do we deserve all of God's spiritual presents? (vs. 5) Why does He give them to us?
5. Christmas is celebrated once a year. How often can we celebrate our Baptism? (See Luther's Small Catechism: "What does such baptizing with water signify?") How does your family remember baptisms?
6. Today's Gospel lesson is the Christmas story of Luke, chapter 2. Listen to the story as a family. What's your favorite part of the story? Why is Christmas such a special day for you?