

THE BISHOP OF THE BAHAMAS AND THE TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS

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CHRISTMAS MESSAGE 2018 FROM THE RT. REV'D. LAISH BOYD BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF THE BAHAMAS AND THE TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS

“He came down to earth from heaven, who is Lord and God of all”

– Cecil Frances Alexander (in her hymn, *“Once in Royal David’s City”*)

It’s Christmas once again. In our culture this means excitement, decorations, cards, gifts, food, gatherings, junkanoo, etc. All of these things are good and have their place.

But some of us do not feel the joy and happiness that we are “supposed” to feel because of pain and disappointment in our own lives. Despite all that is wonderful, we are concerned about the way things are going in our two countries, The Bahamas and The Turks and Caicos Islands. We feel the pinch of tough economic times. We see disrespect and a lack of love in many persons’ behaviour. We yearn for opportunity for ourselves and for our children. We are unfulfilled in our relationships. We have less hope for the future than we would like to have, etc...etc....

For many it is tempting to give up, but let’s not do that. Instead, let us fight back. No one can change the world or a country, but each of us can work on ourselves, and then seek to make a difference “in our small corner” with our time and resources. We must believe in ourselves, believe in what we can do ... and then try to DO what we can do.

This brings us to the point of Christmas. God did what God could do: moved by love (*“God so loved the world ...” John 3:16*) God sent His Son, Jesus, into the world to make a difference. His Son became fully human, to identify fully with us and our human condition, and to bring us into a closer relationship with the Father.

There is no question about the fact that Jesus coming into the world changed it for the better. Dr. James Allen said in his well-known poem, *“One Solitary Life”*, that no one person has had anywhere near the impact on the world that Jesus has had. Whether you are a Christian or embrace another religion, or whether you are atheist or agnostic, you have to agree with that. The breakdown comes in human failure to live up to what Christ is all about, and there have been times when the Church has fallen short because individual Christians fell short. This does not change the goodness of God, nor the high purposes of Jesus, nor the good which has been done, nor the love of the Father in sending the Son.

We know what God did and THAT is what Christmas Day and the Christmas Season are all about.

The real question remains: What have we done, what are we doing and what are we going to do to touch the people right around us, and to make the world a better place?

Whatever your beliefs, or whatever you do not believe – which I respect – I challenge you to look at intention and action: God intended to and did send His Son to impact the world. How are we going to LOVE in return? Are we going to LIVE this love ourselves in order to make this world a better place? Though not perfect let us try to do this, and keep on trying to do better than we did before.

This is really what Jesus came for: to call the whole of humanity into a better consciousness of who we are as persons, and to call us all into a deeper relationship with the Divine.

Christians sometimes see Jesus message and challenge as only for us and for those who embrace Christianity. How narrow! How shallow! God's message through Jesus is SO BIG that it spills over into the rest of the whole world, into all religions, and to the people we least expect - and to the people that we dislike, disdain or are most uncomfortable with.

When we embrace Christmas – whether we are Christians or not – we embrace the loving intention of the Heavenly Father in sending His Son to make a colossal impact. We are invited to respond to God by living this love ourselves, i.e., by changing our outlook and by seeking to make the difference that we can make. Sy Miller and Jill Jackson-Miller wrote a wonderful hymn that says, **“Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me!”**

Let's not blame others! Let's start with ourselves and DO WHAT WE CAN DO!

The Most Rev. Michael Curry, Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church of the USA, in his book **“The Power of Love”**, released this year, wrote the following:

“I hope you recognize love as the most powerful force for personal change and for changing the world around us. Yes, we live in scary times. Yes, people are hurting. Yes, people are hurting one another. But anger is not the key; revenge is not the answer. The way of love – the love and power of God – is the key to our hope and our future.

The message of God is very simple. “Love one another. Take care of one another. Take care of creation. And while you're at it, love me – love God.” Do that and you will find your way. That is the core of the gospel. That is the only sermon that matters.”

How appropriate! How timeless! What a borderless challenge! Merry Christmas!

Your Bishop wishes you and your families a loving, life-changing Christmas, and a New Year where we each commit to loving and living for Jesus.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laish Z. Boyd". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

The Rt. Rev'd. Laish Z. Boyd

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AND THE TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS**

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