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**Jpw** How many of you have been to Disney World or one of the Disney theme parks or even on their cruises? Even if you have not, I’m sure we all have experienced the magic of a Disney production in one way or another, either in one of its movies, performances on TV or in person. Incidentally, the annual Disney Christmas Day parade that will be aired tomorrow morning, even though it is pre-recorded back in November.

 Do you know that the Disney company employs more than 170,000 employees in over 40 countries worldwide? It is constantly rated as one of the best run organizations and the best corporation to work for in the world. They take great pride of their culture, their tradition and the values that bear its name. The secret behind this massive conglomerate operation’s success falls into the hands of a group of “Imagineers” – that’s right…Imagineers! It’s a combined word of Imagination and Engineering. They are artists, graphic designers, engineers, computer gurus, lighting and sound technicians who make everything work seamlessly. These imagineers are the brains behind all the Disney productions who are responsible for the creation, the design, and construction of Disney theme parks and attractions worldwide, as well as many of the film productions. These imagineers are the best of the best in their respective industries. Their goal is to create the BEST experience for whoever walks through the gates of one of their theme parks, hotels, or cruises, or watch one of the shows and movies. These imagineers not only define our culture and shape our lives, but they also challenge our imagination of how we perceive and see the world all around us. They make the world even smaller after all.

 Come to think of it, during this Advent/Christmas season, Christians all around the world have also been called to put on our Imagineers’ hats, as we re-imagine the stories of the natal birth that took place more than 2000 years ago. Obviously, none of us were there in person to re-live the moment, yet we believe as an account of our faith that gets passed on from generation to generation. We believe all this took place in accordance to God’s well-orchestrated and choreographed plan. None of this happened through magic or coincidence!!! Our God the Creator is the greatest Imagineer of all time and he is STILL constantly re-creating and re-shaping our lives to be each day.

 So on this holy night, through words that are spoken and meditated upon our hearts or the songs that are sung. **Let us Re-Imagine through our own lens of what the very first Christmas may look, sound, feel, or even smell like back then. More importantly let us imagine what it would be like as we fix our eyes and prepare the way for the coming of our Lord Jesus the Christ once again.**

 Each day God continues to stir our imaginations. God continues to surprise us and challenge us to see things from a fresh new perspective…through God’s perspective, in God’s timing and purpose, and NEVER ours.

 After all, Christmas is never about US, or what WE can get out of it, but instead it is all about God…what God makes of us through the birth of his only begotten Son – who is the greatest present for us all! We welcome this good news of hope that God will continue to shape us in our lives, through the work of the Holy Spirit, in spite of our shortcomings.

 *For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.[[1]](#footnote-1)*

*For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 15:4-6*

 This evening I would also like to invite you to hear the words of Dr. Walter Brueggemann, who is a renounced contemporary theologian and professor emeritus at *Columbia Theological Seminary*.

Dr. Brueggemann challenged all of us to re-imagine what the 1st Christmas was like in a little Palestinian town named Bethlehem more than 2,000 years ago and what it means for all of us today living in the 21st century. Brueggemann challenged us to think not only what happened at the manger but how we may look forward to the return of the once and future King, fulfilling God’s promise…in God’s Kingdom. So let us put our Imagineers’ hat on once again!

Dr. Brueggemann wrote:

 *Here is the good news I am privileged to announce to you. There is a new world available that is here very soon. It is being birthed in the wonder of Jesus of Nazareth. It is a world marked by the stable smell of shepherds and the perfumes of the wise men. It is a world marked by a Friday of suffering and death and by a Sunday of surprise and new life. It is a world that exposes all the contradictions of our present life. It is a world that invites us to move out from here to there in joy, in obedience, in discipline, to begin again.*

 *As [the Apostle] Paul spoke of the truthful reliability of God’s promise, he knew about a world of fickle deception and betrayal, as do we. The world of advertising, of ideology of euphemism offers us endless phoniness that coerces and manipulates and invites into a virtual world that has no staying power. You cannot count on such a world, as it will turn on you and cost you dearly. And yet, out beyond that fickle world, there is the world of God’s reliable fidelity, a God who makes and keeps promises, and you can dwell there.*

 *As Paul envisioned welcome of one another, he knew about a world of exclusion that is grounded in fear and anxiety. And so do we. All around now are barriers and gates and fences that draw lines around gifts and possibilities and resources and access. The lines are drawn closer and closer until all are excluded except the blessed, cunning ones, and even they are left nervous about when the next wall will be built and who will then be excluded. And yet, out beyond the world of exclusion and rejection and hostility, there is an offer of a world of welcome that sees the other not as threat or competitor but as cohort on the pilgrimage of humanity.*

 *When [the Apostle] Paul spoke about living in harmony with one another as a gift of Christ’s new regime, he knew about conflict and quarrelling in his churches and all around the empire. And so do we. We imagine now that liberals and conservatives must be in conflict, and Christians and Muslims must be in shared violence with each other, and poor blacks and rich whites must compete with an edge of hate. And yet, out beyond there is a world reconciled between Jew and Greek, between male and female, between free and slave, and all the other alienations that we can name. Because [on this night], Christ has broken down the walls of separation. In him all sorts of people recover their sanity and their humanity enough to see [each other] as brothers and sisters.*

Let us pray,

Grant us, reconciling God, the imagination with which to see the world coming into being through the wonder of our Lord Jesus of Nazareth, of whom we celebrate his coming on this night and his coming once again. May we embrace his presence among us now, as we look forward to the fulfillment of God’s Kingdom that is here and is yet to come. May thy Kingdom come, and thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

1. *John 3:16-17* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)