Earlier this week, I came across a story on-line about a Pennsylvania man who accidently noticed an image that resembles the face of Jesus on a piece of grilled chicken. Yes, that’s right, a piece of chicken!!! How many of you have read or seen that story on the news? It seems a bit of an odd story also when I first heard of it. There have been other similar stories of seeing the image of Jesus or the Virgin Mary on a piece of toast, on the tree trunk or up on the branches, through the glasses or up in the sky’s cloud formation. But on a piece of chicken, that was the first one?

 Although this man who discovered the strange sighting was not a very religious man, somehow he felt as though this was still a divine intervention that God was trying to tell him something. He was still puzzled by what this all means.

 According to some recent study, many people, especially about young people nowadays, are in search for God. They acknowledge that there is something there but they just don’t know what. Some might have been skeptical about organized religion and yet deep inside their hearts, they are wrestling on a quest for a spiritual presence. Many feel insecured about themselves and are in search of some form of higher power. They’ve yearned for meaning and purpose throughout their lives looking for answers, only to be disappointed or left with more questions and even doubts if there is a God at all.

 One may ask, “Where is God…if there is a God at all? Where can Jesus be found? Is he just a mythical character? Many atheists would even challenge the Christians, “prove to me that God or Jesus exists right now!” Even Satan attempted to challenge Jesus if he had thrown himself down from the temple and God will surely send angels to save him.

 But the fact of the matter is….God cannot be tested and **Jesus IS everywhere**, not literally of course but in a metaphorical and a Spiritual sense that is. God’s Spirit is omnipresent and knows what’s on our hearts and our minds. If we acknowledge and confess that God is the Creator of the universe and everything under the sun, including you and me, then we shall proclaim that God the Creator belongs everywhere and everything belongs to God. We may not see God physically but that doesn’t mean that God does not exist. It’s like the wind the blows the leaves and the snow around, we know the wind is there…we cannot see it but we can feel it and see the effect that it causes. And God is vigilantly watching over us every single moment of our lives through our thoughts and our actions. And God is present among us right now whenever and wherever 2 or 3 are gathered in God’s name.

 The season of Advent offers us the opportunity to do a little soul searching. It invites us to reflect upon **who we are** and **whose we are**, as we prepare ourselves and search for **meaning and purpose of “God with us” being born to us and in us.** It’s not about searching for best deals on Black Friday or for the hottest item of the Christmas season of course; but rather to look for signs and glimmers of **Hope, Joy, Peace** and **Love –** the essence of who God is….and what the world so lacks these days. Only the Prince of Peace and the Savior Christ can bring this in our lives. Many have gone all over the place searching for the wrong things, where in fact, God remains centered in our hearts. We’ve just drifted apart from Him and need to find our ways back to God.

 We search for meaning and purpose of what this season is about. It’s about counting God’s blessings and offering thanks back to God through others who may not have experienced God’s presence and love.

 As we heard earlier, many us have prepared and contributed these shoeboxes that are filled with not just toys, candies, or essential household items, but many blessings that we are willing to share with others. These boxes are not just wrapped with wrapping paper but they are wrapped with our personal touch of love that we are willing to share with others. We pray that whoever opens these boxes may discover the joy and the love that can be found only through Christ. This is the Gospel of Christ’s presence in our lives.

 Contrary to many critics both within and outside the church, the Gospel and the church of Jesus Christ is still alive today. It may not be booming like it used to be in the North American or the European churches, but the global church – the body of Christ remains actively alive and well today. Through our gifts and our prayers, we are sending messages of hope to those children around the world that Jesus loves them no matter who they are or where they are. Even when they’ve never heard of who Jesus is, God still loves them. God’s love extends and breaks down all barriers. This is exactly what the Apostle Paul was referring to when he wrote to the church in Philippi and us today that we must “***live our lives in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.”*** How we live our lives and what we believe must go hand-in-hand. We cannot say one thing and practice another.

 On this Christ the King Sunday, once again the Apostle Paul challenged us that we are to put aside all things and to re-claim Christ as our top priority and the center of our lives. We must rediscover God’s presence, not through the dazzling and glamorous displays around us…but right here in our hearts! **We must live an exemplary life worthy of the Gospel**…for Christ laid down His humble life for us and we ought to lay down ours for the sake of others as well. In life or in death, we belong to God. Christ is our ultimate motivation of our existence.

 As Paul wrote in his letter to the church in Philippi and to us today, that in **whatever hardship and challenges that we might be experiencing, our desire is to be with Christ**. Some of us might be facing with various problems at our home, on our jobs, financially or relationally with our friends and families….we may find ourselves wandering in the lost seas and not knowing where to begin in tackling our problems. But God assures us and gives us hope that as long as we place God first and foremost in our lives, God will render God’s grace and mercy upon us and will help us through times of trials and needs. This is God’s assurance for us through the good news of the Gospel.

 **When we are living IN Christ, Christ lives IN us**. As the Psalmist declares, “let everything that has breath praise the LORD.”[[1]](#footnote-1) Every breath that we take shall give God all the worthiness and declare God’s glory.

 What does our text mean by “worthiness” of the gospel? Isn’t believing in God “good enough”? Aren’t we worthy enough in God’s sight? Some may interpret this “worthiness” as a notion of entitlement….we may find ourselves always coming up a little bit short of God’s expectation. We have set our benchmarks that are too high for us to achieve. But the benchmark that Christ set for our living is never too high for us to strive for.

 Unfortunately no matter how hard we try, we would always seem to come up a little bit short, because we are human beings and we’re prone to our own sinfulness and shortcomings. God knows and understands that. And God reaches down upon us to meet us “half-way” through His son – Jesus Christ and His teachings. God redeems our shortcomings and renders God’s grace and compassion for all of us. But that’s not an excuse for us to sit back, relax, count our blessings and waiting for Jesus’ return. God wants us to remain active in bringing new life to God’s gospel message of salvation each and every day.

 Our sense of worthiness is about honoring and fulfilling God’s purpose and calling within each one of us. We declare and proclaim that Christ is still our head and we are all individual members of His body. During this upcoming season of Thanksgiving and Advent, **may we dedicate time in our busy schedule to do a little inward and outward soul searching.** Search for the deeper meaning and purpose of who we are and who we worship. Search for God’s presence during this troubling, turbulent and even disturbing world that we live, where God’s love may seem to be distantly foreign and difficult to grasp. As Jesus commanded us to *seek first God’s kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well*.[[2]](#footnote-2)

 As we read from the Gospel of Matthew earlier, Jesus offered us a choice to choose….choose God or choose the world! On the day when the Son of Man returns, He will separate the people like the shepherd separating the sheep and the goats. Not everyone is going to make it through the narrow gate. But Jesus offered us ample opportunities to choose God in a Gospel Worthy Living through the lives of others (or a choice doomed for eternal damnation). The choice is up to us: “*Just as we do it to the least of those who are hungry, those who are thirsty, those who are naked, and those who are strangers among us, we do it for God.”[[3]](#footnote-3)* That’s **Gospel Worthy Living!**

As we wait and reflect on the true meaning and purpose of the season, may we ultimately find hope and thanksgiving in Christ and re-dedicate our focus and honor onto Him. ***“Be still, and know that I am God![[4]](#footnote-4) Be Still and know! Be Still!”***

 On this last Sunday on our church Liturgical calendar, may we look back into the past with thanksgiving and look forward into the new season with courage while proclaiming God’s reign in us. Christ remains the sovereign King and the center of our worship and being among God’s people. God has called us to the hope among the hopeless, the peace among those who are distressed, and reflection of God’s light in the world of darkness.

 In joy and in sadness, in abundance and want, God still proclaim God’s reign over us through His Son Jesus Christ. In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, who reigns in our lives and for the ages to come, Amen.

1. *Psalm 150:6* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Matthew 6:33* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Matthew 25:40* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Psalm 46:10* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)