

Sermon for Sunday 28 December 2025 @ Bethesda UMC/Baltimore

First Sunday after Christmas

Scriptures: Isaiah 63:7-9; Psalter: 86; Psalm 148; Hebrews 2 :10-18 ; Matthew 2:13-23

Sermon:

I sat for a long time before I began answering the question I felt we needed to answer with this sermon.

What are we thankful for at this moment?

Perhaps it was because I've just begun reading a book by a former professor at my seminary, who is Latino and grew up in New York City's poor section among lots of emigrants.

His thesis is that the place we need to start, all over today's world, to answer that question is in our great cities.

I've just read the introduction, but without going any further, I've read that he feels that's where tomorrow's typical citizens will come from. There is so much pressure, there are so many lacks and abuses, and those who survive will have had to overcome so much, that we just can't predict what they will be thankful for most, or literally what they will be like.

If we think awhile, that puts us to shame. Every church, every school, every jail and hospital in our community has some major concern we might try to answer.

If that's so, people like that must be considered our neighbors, and if we follow Jesus, we are bound to love them as much as we love ourselves.

That's what I hear this Sunday preaching. What is our bottom line? What is the hope that looms largest in our minds?

The fact that we can't answer that question is a high calling. The God that we know in Jesus Christ is enticing. Part of what draws out the best in us is what we yearn for and admire.

I'd like to see ...but wait a moment. What is it I really want right now? If I let myself be hopeful, what is my chief need? Would I be healthy? curious?

Let us pray. Dear God, you've just confronted us with lots of light, and quite a bit of darkness. Christmas brings out plenty of goodness, and enough badness to warn us as well. Old or young, little or big, scared or courage-filled, we are a little wiser than we were last Christmas. Teach us how to pray forward, Lord. Let the scripture and the company of this moment open us more to our good side. Give us, in this new year, ways to stretch and grow as neighbors. Let this space, this place, this little bit of patience with each other, and with ourselves, pay off some. We are not unworthy in your eyes. Let us see more than we did. Thank you. Amen

