

Good help is hard to find. Or at least it seems that way at times. That was the case at the first church I served in Ventura, CA. We were doubling the size of the original church building with volunteer labor. Like Peace, that church had some skilled laborers who knew what they were doing and some not so skilled volunteers like me. We had a couple of exceptional brick and stone masons. One of my jobs was being their assistant or hoddy. My job was to mix up the mud (cement), keep them supplied with it, and clean up the tools and the mixer. I wasn't very good and made a real mess of the cement mixer one day.

People want to help, especially at Christmas time. Maybe your kids or grandkids help you with baking, decorating or wrapping presents. And maybe you've discovered that they too are really good at making a mess. Sometimes the experience of working together is more valuable than the actual help you get.

There are times when we really need help. God knows how much help we need. God tells us, ***"You must be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy."*** (Leviticus 19:2 NLT) The problem is, God is holy and we are not. We are not even close to living a perfect life. We are all guilty of sinning, of falling short of the glory of God. Because we are guilty, we deserve the death penalty because that is the penalty for sin. If we don't want to face eternal death, we need help because we can't save ourselves. It doesn't matter how hard we try. The prophet Isaiah wrote, ***"We are all infected and impure with sin. When we display our righteous deeds, they are nothing but filthy rags."*** (Isaiah 64:6 NLT) In other words, we need help.

God is ready to help us. God helps real people. (Drama: ***"Who Begat Whom" @ 11:00 Service***) The ancestry of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew begins with Abraham, who was the father of one messed up family. Abraham tried to pass off his wife Sarah as his sister, threatening God's promise that he would have a son. Then Abraham took Sarah's servant and had a son through her, failing to trust in God. Jacob, Abraham's grandson, was a deceiver who robbed his brother of his birthright and blessing. Judah, one of Jacob's sons, got his daughter-in-law Tamar pregnant. Salmon married Rahab, a prostitute from Jericho. David had an affair with Bathsheba and then arranged for her husband's death. These people were all ancestors of Jesus, people who needed real help.

That is why God sent Jesus into the world. God promised Abraham, ***"I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."*** (Genesis 21:3) God kept that promise when Jesus entered the world. He is promised Savior from the line of Abraham, Jacob and David. Jesus came into the world to help people. Jesus' very first miracle was helping a newly married couple at their wedding reception. When asked by the followers of John the Baptist if he was the promised Savior, Jesus answered, ***"Go***

back to John and tell him what you have seen and heard—the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, and the Good News is being preached to the poor.” (Luke 7:22 NLT) Jesus helped others and in the process showed that He is the promised Savior.

The greatest help that Jesus gives is validated by his greatest miracle. Jesus was condemned to death, died on a Roman cross, and buried in a guarded tomb. But the tomb could not hold him because he rose from the dead on Easter Sunday morning. He defeated sin and death. His greatest miracle is His resurrection. By His death and resurrection, Jesus defeated sin and death. Jesus takes the unacceptable and makes them acceptable to God. He takes people who are nowhere close to being holy and declares them holy in God’s eyes. He takes the unclean and makes them clean. He takes sinners and calls them into His Church, the Bride of Christ.

Jesus is ready to help us too.

- Sin produces guilt. But Jesus helps us by forgiving our sins and taking our guilt away.
- Sometimes we doubt God. But Jesus answers our doubt by loving us, by not giving up on us even when we are not sure about him. One week after the resurrection, Jesus invited “Doubting Thomas” to see and to touch the marks of the cross. He loves us and invites us to take a closer look at him, too.
- Fear can control us, even paralyze us. But Jesus is the “Prince of Peace.” He gives us the kind of peace that the world cannot give, peace to overcome our fears. He calmed the storm at sea when the disciples were afraid that they were going to drown and gave them peace. He can calm the storms in our lives and give us, His peace.
- These things can make us feel isolated, alone. But Jesus reaches out to us and welcomes us into God’s family. Jesus reconnects us with God and with one another in faith. He gave up his life for us and calls us His friends.

Christmas is the Gift of God’s Son to help us. Jesus gives us the help that we need, real help that lasts. Jesus makes the difference for us and for all who believe in Him. Let Jesus help you today. Make your Christmas the celebration of God’s great of Himself to help us, to save us, to restore us to His family. And then invite others to celebrate Jesus with you. Amen.