



From the Community Pulpit
Christmas Eve
Poetry and Prayer
by **Dr. Robert Lee Hill**
Christmas Eve, December 24, 2005

Community Christian Church 4601 Main Kansas City, Missouri 64112

In This Life – A Poem for Christmas Eve, 2006

Are we too fleshed
to know the cosmic word?
Are we too earthen
to receive heaven's gift?
Are we too bound
by time and skin and daily revocations
to see blessing implications?

Or is it only within this life
that the other life can be given revelation?
Is it, perhaps, foremost in this life
that love becomes real and reigning?
Is it first in this life that Truth
begins its eternal tenure?

God's wager is tangible, not tangent,
in a baby at a mother's generous breast,
kept warm in father's tender hands,
love, now, in this life.
In this life,
now in flesh appearing,
without waver,
knowing no hesitancy or hedging,
receive, believe, be made,
yourself, imperishable, by our great "I am"
– in this peculiar way, in this particular life.

Beyond the sacred tree of Eden's ether,
beneath the crimson tree at time's crossing,
before the shining tree by crystal fountain,
in this life –
this precious pulsing of blood and love,
this quick gulping of breath and joy,
this sacred brimming of careless time
and timeless caring –
in this life,
we bend and break and break again
to see and behold the One
who gives all life, the future,
and begins the finale of eternal love.

Christmas Eve Prayer, Dec. 24, 2005

Preparatory Remarks: This is a very special moment. You have an appointment with God in this time of communion and connection with the Lord of the Universe. Close, intimate, in a language that is all yours, with the Almighty. So let us welcome it with gladness as we share everything that is in your hearts, anything that we've brought here tonight

Christ be with You... Let us pray...

O Lord of Love, O God of Grace, O Maker of Mystery,

In the presence of Your generosity tonight, our hearts are brimming nearly to the point of breaking.

In the glow of the light You shone on the Bethlehem of Jesus' birth (and that You keep shining on our own "Bethlehem" here), we are glad.

And being found here, in this place, in this moment by You, we rejoice!

Our joy is full because You have found us, despite our evasions, beyond our attempts to escape Your grace.

Our thanks are unending, because You have found us and have upheld us, when we had lost ourselves and could hardly keep going.

Our humility is overflowing because You have lovingly found us when sometimes we didn't believe love, or being loved, or being lovable was even possible.

We rejoice because You have found us!

As we peer over Christ's manger of blessed mercy tonight, and, more pressingly, in all of our tomorrows, inspire us to be vigilant in finding *You*.

From this night on, lead us to find You each and every day of our walk in faith.

Lead us to find You in the eyes and hands and unfettered exuberant joy of children, for we know that unless we become like children we cannot enter into the glory of Your eternal reign.

Lead us to find You in the simplest, most essential gatherings, around a crust of bread, sharing a cup of water, listening to a story of truth, for we know that it is such holy gatherings that we meet more than eye or ear or soul can behold.

Lead us to find You in the beauty of the world, for we know that "Beauty will save the world."

Lead us to find You in the communion of souls we encounter in the family of faith, for we know that day by day, the Word of Your gift in Christ is becoming flesh again and again in the those seeking to become more like Christ.

Lead us to find You in each and every person who abides on the margins of this earthly journey - on the edge of despair, along the borderland of unbounded pain, at the crossroads of a crisis, in a lair of loneliness, in the horrors of homelessness, on the precipice of being poor - for we know that Mary's baby, Your Son, and gift to a waiting world, our Christ, said we would always be able to find Him at the address of "the least of these our brothers and sisters."

You have found us and we are glad!

As we continuously, urgently seek to find You, we rejoice!

And in this holy finding, dear God, make Christmas happen for us not merely for a moment but for a lifetime, a lifestyle of such moments!

In Jesus' holy name, AMEN.