

"Refocused"
Luke 2:1-20/Christmas Story
Christmas Day Reflection/2011
First Presbyterian Church of Sharon
By Rev. Dr. Glenn Hink

"All it takes is a little getting used to" I was told. I had just picked up my new glasses. "For distances look through the top. And for reading we put a slight bifocal in the bottom." And sure enough, that's how it works. To see folks in the back of the church, or balcony, I need to look through the top. And to read the Bible I need to look through the "slight bifocal" (I prefer to say I have a "slight" bifocal). And if I look over or under my glasses.....well, it's all a blur. The trick is to refocus according to what I want to see.

There's some refocusing going on with the Steelers now. For weeks the focus has been winning the division over the Ravens, and getting a home field game in the playoffs. Now the focus is "just get healthy." Specifically get quarterback Ben Roethlisberger healthy. Injuries have changed the Steelers' situation. So there has been a refocusing on what's most important.

After 10 years, our soldiers have come home from Iraq. It has been a great Christmas joy to see and hear about families reunited for Christmas. Before the focus had been on communication; emails, phone calls, maybe even something as old fashioned as a letter. The focus was on staying in contact. Our Sharon Rotary Club has sent numerous phone cards to soldiers in Iraq to help with communication. But now, with soldiers home, the focus has changed. Now in families it's about living together, adjusting, getting jobs, and making decisions together about groceries, car repairs, and Christmas presents. When soldiers come home, there is a refocusing in their homes. The situation has changed.

Years ago when I was first a pastor, and had young children at home, I wondered how Christmas Day worship would work out in our home. Normally on Christmas morning there was coffee to be made, gifts to open, thank you lists to start, wrapping paper to clean up, batteries to be installed, and preparations for dinner to get started. How would it all happen with Christmas Day worship?

But you know.....it did happen. And it still does on Christmas Day Sundays. Gifts still get opened and dinner still gets started.....but when there's worship on Christmas Day, it's like the day gets refocused. To gather together in a worship service to hear the Christmas story and sing carols and light candles refocuses things. It all still

happens.....but in an order that just seem better and bigger.....more hopeful and more joyful. Christmas Day worship just refocuses the day.....and I believe we see a little clearer.

And maybe some folks are thinking about Christmas dinner today. For some it's a table or house filled with family. It's a time of noise, laughter and Christmas chaos. For others it's a time of stress. Old hurts, hard words and strained relationships are the concern. And for some others Christmas dinner is a quiet affair, perhaps with memories and quiet grief over who is gone.

But around this communion table.....around this meal.....there is a refocusing. God's grace invites us all. There is room for everyone. Here there is laughter. Here there is healing. Here there is community....no one eats alone. Here our Christmas Day dinner is refocused as we know the love of the One who came to be with us on the first Christmas Day, and we love God and each other. Here we are refocused, and see better life, better hope, and better love.

Christmas Day worship refocuses our day. It's everything it always is.....and more.
Merry Christmas.