

“Can I Get A Witness?”
Luke 2:41-52
Pastors Rudy Dimery and Jill Kirchner-Rose
December 31, 2017

Jill and Rudy: Begin with words of gratitude for the relationship between Mentone UCC and Redlands UCC.

Jill: What a joy to come together on this last day of 2017 to review, to reflect, to celebrate. Undoubtedly, we have been blessed this year. A few of the highlights of this year include:

- Jill: The Great American Eclipse. It was 70 miles wide, 2500 miles long, lasting 93 minutes from Oregon on the West Coast to South Carolina on the East Coast. Approximately, 88% of U.S. adults watched the cosmic show, either in person or electronically.
- Rudy: It was the year of the Woman’s March which drew over 5 million people worldwide.
- Jill: Along those same lines, the courageous hashtag #Metoo was used by millions of women to share their tales of sexual harassment. Yes, this is a year in which women felt empowered to come forward to tell their stories.

Jill: But, it was a difficult year in many ways. Political tweets and headlines made the news almost everyday.

Rudy: We have heard much about fake news or as some put it “alternative facts”.

Jill: The U.S. President and the North Korean dictator engaged in a battle of words, while North Korea’s real weapons of war keep improving.

Rudy: Kin Jung Un fired an inter-continental ballistic missile capable of reaching the United States.

Jill: And there was a lot of turn over on Capital Hill: Bannon, Priebus, Comey, Flynn, Spicer, to name a few.

Rudy: And there is the continual probing of Russian connections to the 2016 elections.

Jill: There have been terrorist attacks around the world: Manchester Arena attack, London Bridge attack, Barcelona attack.

Rudy: In our own country, we woke up to scenes of horror in Las Vegas with one of the deadliest mass murders in U.S. history. Fifty-eight people died and hundreds more were injured.

Jill: And what about that awful mass shooting in Sutherland Springs, Texas at First Baptist Church? That sure hit close to home with a shooting taking place in a benign House of Worship.

Rudy: There was a harvest of flames this year, too. The deadliest year of wildfires in California history took place this year!

Jill: And what about the Neo Nazis and White Supremacists in Charlottesville chanting “Blood and soil” and “Jews will not replace us” while bearing tiki torches?

Rudy: Let’s not forget the swarm of storms that took place this year. A trio of monster hurricanes battered Houston, Florida, and Puerto Rico and devastated islands in the Caribbean.

J

ill: It has been a very rough year in so many ways. I echo today’s scripture passage. Mary and Joseph have lost Jesus. “Where is he?” they cry. I, too, have found myself crying this year, “Where is the Divine? O God, have you abandoned us?”

Rudy: But this is not the first year in which people have questioned the absence of Jesus. People have often asked, “Where is God?” And some have found the presence of Christ in the most unlikely of places.

Jill: Yes, that is true. You and I were reflecting the other day about an African-American woman who was displaced by Hurricane Katrina. Remember Hurricane Katrina in 2005? Up until this year, it had been the strongest hurricane recorded in

the Gulf region. Yet, this woman refused, refused to miss the presence of Jesus in her midst. The story goes like this:

There was a mother who lived in New Orleans who was displaced by Hurricane Katrina. She lost everything that she had: her home, car, family. And when they evacuated her, they sent her to a shelter between New Orleans and Baton Rouge. And while she sat there on a cot that they had provided for her, she had been without food and water and necessities and she began to cry and she started to shed tears. And while she was crying she thought on the goodness of the Lord and she started singing this little song, (Rudy): “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus; Jesus, Jesus, Jesus; Jesus, Jesus, Jesus; Jesus, Jesus, Jesus.”

Jill: A young man walked up to her and said, “Mother, why do you call on Jesus? Shouldn’t you be calling on FEMA, shouldn’t you be calling on the Red Cross, on the Salvation Army, or better yet on the President Bush and Cheney.” And she said, “Son, you don’t understand. There is a reason I am calling on that name because there is hope in that name. There is someone who can rescue us from the storm in that name. There is a reason I am calling on that name Jesus.” And you know what she said to that young person, Let me tell you why I call on that name.

(Rudy): “Savior, Savior, Savior; Savior, Savior, Savior, Savior; Savior, Savior, Savior; (What’s his name?) Jesus, Jesus, Jesus.”

Jill: Well about that time, the paramedics were rushing by with a stretcher. They had an old man on that stretcher who had a seizure because he couldn’t get his medication or his prescription and she stopped him and said, “Where are you taking this man?” And they said, “We are trying to get him over to the medical unit to get him some help.” She said, “Let me look at him” and while she was looking at this elderly man, a young girl came up with a baby in her arms and the baby had a fever. And she said, “Let me look at the baby too.” And the young boy said, “Why do you want to look at these folks? Why do you want to look at them?” And you know what she told him, (Rudy): “Healer, Healer, Healer” That’s what the mother said, “Healer, Healer, Healer; Healer, Healer, Healer; Healer, Healer, Healer; (What’s his name?) “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus.”

Jill: Well, about that time there was a big commotion by the exit door. Folks were rushing to the exit doors to see what was going on. They were making a lot of

noise. Someone sent a note that said there were 3 tractor trailers out there with food, water, and medicine. And mother started to cry – she really lost it now and somebody else sent another note saying there were 2 more tractor trails that just showed up with dry clothes and pampers and all the other stuff that they needed. And mother just lost it – she really started crying all over the place. And the young boy walked up to mother and said, “Mother, why are you crying now? You ought to be rejoicing; you ought to be shouting; why are you crying now?” And she said, “Son, I am rejoicing.” She lifted up her head and began to sing, Rudy: “Thank you, thank you, thank you; Thank you, thank you, thank you; thank you, thank you, thank you; thank you, thank you, thank you. (What’s his name) “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. He’s a strong tower. (“Jesus, Jesus, Jesus”) He’s a shelter in the time of storm. He will be there when things go wrong. There is hope in that name.”
(Song, “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus” / the Katrina Song by Timothy Wright)

Jill: There is hope in that name. It appears that Jesus has been here all along. God does show up. The Divine is present even in the most challenging of circumstances
Then, Rudy brings it home...