

## Nativity of the Lord: Mass at Midnight

**Titus 2: 11-13. Beloved: The grace of God has appeared, saving all and training us to reject godless ways and worldly desires and to live temperately, justly, and devoutly in this age, as we await the blessed hope, the appearance of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.**



*Mark Richards is a husband, step-father, grandfather and teacher. He is a cantor, a member of the Celebration Choir and Schola Cantorum.*

What drew me to this Scripture was that when I was in my late teens and early twenties I rejected everything having to do with the Church. My thoughts were more like a Pantheist: that God was more a part of creation rather than the Author of creation. I thought each of us had this little spark of God and that was all there was. When you're young that kind of idea seems appealing.

As my life progressed I found that I wasn't getting anywhere. My life was pretty lousy. I was still living with my parents. I was broke all the time. Nothing seemed to go my way.

After a time I seemed to think of God more as a creator. When I was younger I thought of Jesus as just a guy that people thought great things about, but I thought he was just a man, no different from anybody else. As time went on I got more of a picture of Jesus Christ as the Son of God and as the Savior and my life started to take a better turn.

This reading speaks about Jesus being our new goal and also that we want to live justly so we can live with Christ after our earthly lives are over. But, to my mind, following Christ is its own reward. Our lives become better because we're living justly. Because we're helping out other people and because we're being decent human beings, our lives are better.

If I had kept on the train I was traveling on I would probably be dead by now. Something awful would have happened to me. I would have gotten in with the wrong kind of people (and I was at that time) and I might have ended up dead, diseased or God only knows what! Whereas by following Christ, by following the proper path my life has been enhanced. It's not just about waiting for this new life that's going to come later, my life now is better because I follow Jesus.

It isn't always easy. There are times when it would be much easier to chuck it all and say, "Hey, I want to go do this over here." But, if you're a true follower of Jesus you look at things and think that Jesus wouldn't do that. He wouldn't want it that way, so I'm not going to do that.

I was a pretty serious alcoholic for a long time. It would have been easy to keep drinking and say, "The heck with everything." I could have just kept going that way. But, my wife pointed out that it was the wrong way to go about life. Thinking from a religious aspect it isn't right to spend your life pickled! So, I chose the tougher path - to stop drinking. There are times, though, when I smell wine or beer, and it's a fight. You'd like to have the alcohol, but you know your life would be worse. Jesus wouldn't want that. He wants good things for people. He wouldn't want you to keep swallowing alcohol.

Christ wants us to have a good life. It's not always an easy life, but it's a good life. When you think about it, there's a whole world of people out there that think they're going to make their conversion at the last moment. They're going to come in at the last hour and they'll reap all the benefits and will have spent their whole life doing what they wanted and convert at the last moment. And, they can, but look at the life they could have had – a nice house, good friends and family. If you keep walking the path of alcohol, crime and drugs you become a part of it, or you become a victim of it.

So, Jesus wants us all to walk away from that life. It isn't only so that we can all be in heaven, but so we can all live a good life and take care of the other people in our life. It makes you 'other-centered' rather than 'self-centered.' The other road can take you down some very dark paths.

Following Jesus isn't just the end goal. It is the goal of today. Following Jesus gives us a better life now, but you have to make that choice – the choice to follow Christ every day. You can choose any path. If you choose to follow Jesus your life is better. You can live your dreams, and, your life will be better than you ever hoped or dreamed because God wants only good things for us.

*If you would like more information regarding Alcoholics Anonymous, please call the parish office at 653-2377 for assistance.*

*For more information on St. John Choirs, please contact Julie Richards at: [jrichards@stjohndavison.org](mailto:jrichards@stjohndavison.org)*