

SERMON  
 First Lutheran Church  
 Aitkin, Minnesota

Invitational Sunday  
 Rev. Darrell J. Pedersen  
 January 13, 2012

### **CHILDREN'S MESSAGE – "The Winter Cat"**

**"The Winter Cat"** is a secular, children's book published by Reader's Digest Books in 1972. My wife Jennifer and I purchased it for our daughter Leah in 1982. The author, Howard Knotts, probably had no inkling that God might be peeking out of his story. When I read the story, it seemed like a wonderful picture of how God and God's people move in our world

This is a story for the children and for all of us. While I am reading please think of any ways that you can see God or God's people at work in this story.

**Read the story...**

### **ADULT MESSAGE – "Reflections on The Winter Cat"**

**How do you see God or God's people at work in this story?** Please **call out your answers** and I will repeat them over the microphone.

If the **house** in our story is the **church building, who are the kids?**

- **"The Body of Christ,"** the people of God, **us**.

If the kids are us, **"the people of God,"** who is the **Winter Cat?**

- Those people **outside** of the church, **not a part of a faith family**.

Can you see a **tough world?**

- A cat born in the summer faces the merciless cold of winter.

Can you see **Baptism** anywhere in the story?

- **"Let's call him Harry."** **"Homer is better. He might come home if we call him Homer."** In Baptism God names and claims us as children of God. In Baptism God promises us an eternal home.

Can you see **Holy Communion** in the story?

- "It's cold tonight. Better put out scraps." God feeds us again and again for forgiveness, fresh starts and for survival in a cold, fearsome world.

Can you see **salvation** in the story?

- "Now the cat finds out about home. He has a box for sleeping in a nice warm corner. He has his own bowl and plate for supper." Our friend is brought into a life-giving, caring relationship.

Can you see the **peace of God/contentment**?

- "Listen to that noisy old Homer purr. Doesn't Homer stop purring ever?" Somehow love, embrace and a warm place to be solves lots of problems, heals lots of hurts, and gives lots of hope...

Is there any **Easter** in the story?

- "And so the children and the cat named Homer wait for the good green days to come." Easter resurrection, the promise of eternal life where there is no more suffering or death, but only life and love with God and God's people forever.

Again, **"The Winter Cat"** is just a secular children's book, yet the story of God's will to love and save all people is clearly reflected in it.

**Does this story reflect us, our Church?**

- Are there winter cats in Aitkin?
- Do we have good news of great love and joy to share?

**A young woman, age twenty-something**, stopped by our church this past week. She was baptized but had had no faith upbringing. She came here because of a traumatic event in her life. She wanted to find out what God had to do with it. She wanted to hear a word of hope and life about the struggles that she faced. She may be a real-life winter cat. She may have lots of friends in the same circumstances. She may need a home place.

**Please think of a winter cat that you personally know.** Think of that person who is out there facing a tough, cold world pretty much alone.

- Do we here at First Lutheran have anything to offer to them?

- Is God about the business of welcoming, loving and caring for people here?
- Who will invite the person you thought of to come into this place of God's love, compassion and care?
- Is there a place saved for them at the Lord's Table here?
- What welcome will they find when they come?

Pastor Bob and the Outreach Team members are staffing a welcome center today. We are giving out church business cards with the hope that each of us will take a couple and perhaps use them to invite a friend or family member to check out this home place. They could be given to anyone who doesn't currently have a spiritual home and faith family. On one side you will find contact information and on the other you will find our worship schedule. If someone you know would like a pastoral visit, Pastor Bob and I are both ready and willing to make that contact.

Please watch now as we view our Bishop Tom Aitken, from Duluth, in a little piece called "Bearing the Marks – Invitation."

+ Show video...

Winter cats, hurting people, someone that could use a warm welcome from Jesus' sisters and brothers gathered here at First Lutheran Church. God is all over that mission. Are you? It is good to be family in Christ.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

