

Trinity Lutheran Church, Gillette, WY
December 24/25, 2007

Christmas is Simple

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen. The text for the sermon is the Gospel, which was read earlier.

The angel who announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds on the fields of Bethlehem was a messenger of few words: *“Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.”*

The first Christmas sermon was a marvel of simplicity. In these simple words, everything that needed to be said was said. The sweet simplicity of Christmas and the Christmas Gospel has been lost somewhere along the way.

Listen to the words of the angel again. *“And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.”* That is where you will find Jesus. You won’t find Him within the royal splendor of Jerusalem, but in the lowly unpleasantness and filth of Bethlehem. You won’t find Him in the palace of a king, but in a small Judean cattle cave. You won’t find Him in the incense perfumed presence of the high priest, but in the company of smelly shepherds and in the dense aroma of a cow barn.

Christmas is a simple wonder, and its message comes in simple words and in simple places. It is simple in its message, simple in its circumstance, simple in its characters, and simple in its faith. However, we lose the wonder of this holy season because we look in wrong directions. We seek its wonders in the beauty of our

Christmas lights and in the thrill of Christmas pageantry. We seek the Christmas message in gifts and cards and all the pomp and circumstance that make up the season of Christmas but in the end, we often overlook what makes up Christmas day: *the babe, the Son of Mary.*

When the evangelist St. Luke recorded the event, he scarcely said a word that would identify the deity in Jesus Christ to mark Him as the God of God and Light of Light and very God of very God. He simply told the story of a humble birth in humble circumstance to humble peasant parents.

Through all the simplicity of the birth narrative of Christ, we do so much to make it complicated. The focus is put on us, on the world, and taken away from the point of Christ, Jesus Christ, a baby born in a manger. Aside from all of the festivities, all the cards, all the songs, this day revolves around a baby, who grew in stature, who became a man and took upon Himself all of our sins. We take what is simple and make it complex; so complex, that we can miss the point of what Luke records for us.

The simple of it is this: Jesus was born in a manger, the most non-ideal conditions for a birth, especially for the birth of a King. The fact that the Savior was born in such humble surroundings and of such an unassuming mother was not meant to make us feel sorry for Him. Where do we have the time to feel sorry for Him anyways when we take the focus of Christmas from Him and put on worldly things, making the Christmas message complicated? The manner of His birth was in keeping with His mission: “*For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*” There would be no posh palace on earth for this King. His reign on earth

would be marked by humility and Luke sets that up for us from the beginning, by focusing on where the Christ Child was born.

This is the Christmas story which Luke tells us. This is the story which we have heard year after year. This is the story which we have seen time and time again in a *Charlie Brown Christmas*. The Baby is Christ, the Lord, says the angel. He is the Messiah, the anointed One. He's the One that God has promised through the ages, the One for whom His people have waited through centuries of darkness and suffering. God the Father has specifically appointed His Son to go about this work, and He will accept Jesus' sacrifice on your behalf. No matter what appearances indicate, no matter how the manger and cross look, this Christ will not fail in what He has come to do.

This Christmas message continues to get simpler and simpler, regardless of how complex we make it. The angel doesn't just say, "There is born a Savior, Christ the Lord." The angel says, "*For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.*" Unto you! This Savior is not here to save the world in general, but you in particular. He's not your Savior if you manage to stay out of trouble and under the radar while He cleans up the place. He's born to save you, specifically. Because He desires the death of no one – and earnestly desires that you have eternal life, He's become flesh to die in your place on the cross. That's the reason for this birth. He's been born to die for the sins of the world. Not just the generic world; He's born to die for you.

It's incredible to think that our salvation hinged upon this little Child's birth that we celebrate today. Mary knew that Jesus was going to be important. The angels knew that Jesus was going to be important. They made it known to the shepherds out in the fields. What joy it would be to hear the message from the angels: "*Fear not, for behold,*

I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger...Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased.”

This message is so simple; there shouldn't be any reason why everyone shouldn't hear it. There should be no one who hasn't heard the message from the angel that a Savior is born for the entire world. In Christ, we have a Savior sent from God our Father.

The Savior, though born on Christmas day, is present year-round. Why do we make December such a month of focus on Christmas, somewhat on the coming of Jesus Christ, and when December 26 rolls around, we put Jesus back on the shelf until next December? Christ is present in the world year-round, not just one month out of the year. He came to save us from our sins year-round, not just one month out of the year. The shepherds were changed forever by what they had seen and heard. Should it be any different for us? Shouldn't we be changed forever by hearing the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Instead of putting Jesus back on the shelf the day after Christmas, rejoice in who the angel declares Him to be: the Savior, which is Christ the Lord. He is the Savior, which is Christ the Lord, every day of the year. He was born for our sin and takes away our sin every day of the year. Because you were born in sin, He is born to save you from sin. Because you're made of mortal flesh and blood, He becomes flesh and blood to raise you up to immortality. Because you face death, He is born to die and give you life. He is your Savior, Christ the Lord. And He is born for you and has forgiven for all of your sins. In the name of Immanuel, God with us, amen. Now the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, amen.