

CHRISTMAS EVE
ISAIAH 9:2-7
TITUS 2:11-14
LUKE 2:1-20
DECEMBER 24, 2018

We have heard this story before. Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem and the child is born. It is a story about the government giving an order, an angel declaring the good news and the angel chorus singing the first Christmas carol, which was not Joy to the World or Silent Night. This is a story of shepherds going quickly to see this thing the angels were talking about and about a mother pondering these things in her heart. Its Christmas and this is the story of Jesus being born in Bethlehem but there is more to the story than just a child being born. I believe there were many babies born in Bethlehem on that night. There have been babies born since that night. Tonight we baptize Margaret Rose Cooling who was born less than a month ago. Every baby born is a gift from God but the child born that night was very special gift from God.

Luke 2:6, 7 While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Christmas is about sharing good news of great joy for all the people. It is about gathering to remember what Christmas is. Christmas is more than just a Happy Holiday. For Christians, Christmas cannot and must not be thought of as one winter holiday along with all other winter holidays. Christmas is nothing without Jesus Christ. There is no reason for us to celebrate Christmas if we do not remember that Jesus is the one born on that night. It is about Jesus that the angels sang and it is Jesus the shepherds went to see. Tonight we celebrate Christmas because Christmas is about Jesus coming to save me from my sins. Jesus is the Christ and he is the reason I am here at Our Savior's on Christmas Eve.

This is a story about God intervening in our history. It is God coming at a certain time and a certain place inviting certain people to join the party. The story is about God giving this gift to all humanity in all times and places. It is God telling us that God loves us so much that God would share God's Son with us. It is a time for people in and around Bethlehem to join God in welcoming this baby boy whose name is Jesus and who would be Immanuel or God with us. We gather this evening to celebrate the birth the Savior of the world. We come together this evening to tell God thank you for this special bundle of joy that will bring peace on earth and good will to all.

A couple of weeks ago our Sunday School students shared this good news with us. All of our kids are special and each had a special part in telling this good news. One of the highlights of the service was the angel, whose name was Leslie in our service, stood on a chair and shared good news. She shared the news with Mary, telling her she was going to have a baby. She shared the good news with Joseph who was quietly considering how he might divorce Mary. The angel shared this good news with the shepherds and with all of us that were gathered. The angel shared the message but the message is about Jesus who always gets center stage.

Jesus also needs to have center stage in your life. Another memory is of my mother on Christmas morning. As I remember it my mother wanted to make sure we did not lose the reason for Christmas. One Christmas morning we were tearing packages open when my mother appeared at the doorway to the living room where our tree was. I started to show her one of the gifts and how it worked. She smiled as she took hold of the toy I held up to her. She handed it back to me and said, "That is nice but there is one thing we need to do before we do anything else. We need to

pray thanking God for Jesus.” At that point we stopped what we were doing and my mother prayed. She prayed thanking God for giving the best gift of all. She prayed thanking God for Jesus coming into the world.

How many of us as parents will seek to place the Lord Jesus in the center of the stages in our lives? How many parents will show our children that Jesus is the Christ that he is the one that gets prominence in our lives? How many parents will teach their children that Jesus is the one that comes to us not only at Christmas but also every day of the year? How many parents will listen to the Lord so that we teach our children about the Christ child that came to set the people free.

Luke 2:9-11 Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.

There were shepherds keeping watch over their flocks by night. They were there and they were doing whatever shepherds do when they are living in the fields with the sheep. I don't think these were religious men. They were not the kind of man you would want your daughter to bring home for dinner. They were not well thought of by people in the Jewish religion but God thought them highly of. They were thought of so highly that God sent angels with the message of salvation. Do not be afraid. I am not bringing a message of warning but of great news. This news is for you. This is yours. This news and this child are for you. This Messiah is your Messiah and this salvation is for you.

Today we come here and we also get to hear this good news because the news is for you and me. The angel comes once again and tells us to not be afraid. Stop trembling and listen to the word of the Lord. Stop trying to make sense of these things on your own and let God bless you. Stop

being stubborn in your own understanding and let the Lord tell you of the good news that is for you. **Isaiah 9:6 For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**

This child born of the Virgin Mary is born for you and for me. He is God with us and he is God for us. Jesus did not come for his own benefit but that the world might be saved through him. Today is Christmas Eve. The song says that this is the most wonderful time of the year. Make it truly wonderful by sharing the gift of love with your family and friends. Give thanks to God for this gift of life that we celebrate today. Thanks be to God. Merry Christmas. AMEN