

# Sermon for Christmas Day

**Date:** December 25, 2018

**Location:** St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

**Old Testament:** Isaiah 62:10-12

**Epistle Reading:** Titus 3:4-7

**Gospel Reading:** Luke 2:1-20

**Sermon Text:** Titus 3:4-7

**Sermon Title:** Why did Jesus come?



## Hymns:

- LSB 376 – Once in Royal David's City
- LSB 392 – God Loves Me Dearly (v.1,5)
- LSB 367 – Angels from the realms of glory (v. 1,2,5)
- LSB 366 – It Came upon the Midnight Clear
- LSB 361 – O Little Town of Bethlehem (v.4)
- LSB 364 – Away in a Manger (v.3)
- LSB 358 – From Heaven Above to Earth I Come (v.13)
- LSB 374 – Gentle Mary Laid Her Child
- LSB 391 – Rejoice, Rejoice This Happy Morn
- LSB 390 – Let Us All with Gladsome Voices (v.1,4)
- LSB 368 – Angels We Have Heard on High
- LSB 387 – Joy to the World

## Liturgy:

Divine Service: Special



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**Text: Titus 3:4-7**

When God our Savior made his kindness and love for humanity appear, he saved us, but not because of anything we had done to gain his approval. Instead, because of his mercy he saved us through the washing in which the Holy Spirit gives us new birth and renewal. God poured the Spirit on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior. As a result, God in his kindness has given us his approval and we have become heirs who have the confidence that we have everlasting life.

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Grace to you in the name of the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen.

Why did Jesus come? Why was He born into such lowly means? I mean really, think about it. He was born in a stable. Nothing but straw to comfort Him. Nothing but a manger, a feed trough, to hold him. Why would He do such a thing? To come from the throne room, of the palace at New Jerusalem, to a stall for animals, that had probably not been cleaned very well in several days because the inn keeper was busy keeping his inn.

Did Jesus do this because we are so wonderful, and so deserving that He just wanted to come and be with us? Did He do this because we were the kind of high class people that He likes to hang out with? Did He do this because He likes to be seen with the upper echelon of society? Is that why He came to this lowly state? Probably not.

Did you notice what the Old Testament reading said. It said that we were called deserted and abandoned.<sup>1</sup> What sort of people are deserted and abandoned? People that are easily forgotten. People that can, by societies standards, be easily thrown away. People that the world would say have no worth or value.

What does the world say about us; about Christian people. I watched an interview, not so long ago, with a woman who was part of an organization called, “Freedom From Religion.” What I found most stunning about this person’s comments, (besides her utter lack of any real knowledge of history, concerning this countries beginnings, or history concerning the time of Jesus,) was the incredible contempt she had for Christians. This person would preach, “tolerance, tolerance” and then go on about how Christians are deluded, weak-minded, ignorant people. Not free-thinking, enlightened, rational minded people like her.

What part of telling you you’re stupid is tolerant? What part of telling you you’re weak-minded is tolerant? What part of telling you you’re irrational is tolerant. What she was really saying is, “If you’re not like me, you’re not worth anything.” That shouldn’t surprise us. The world hates Jesus.<sup>2</sup> The world hates the Father. The world pushes the Holy Spirit away. Why would you expect the world to treat you any different?

Isaiah says, however, that now you are not deserted, you are not abandoned.<sup>3</sup> That means someone came to save you. Someone came to claim you. Someone came to call you His own. Who did that?

In the Gospel lesson we heard about how angels came to tell shepherds of Jesus’ birth. Now you need to understand something about shepherds in those days. This is a desert country. There’s not a lot of water around. Bathing, while you’re out in the fields is just something you don’t do. The water needs to be kept protected and fresh, so that the people, and the herds can drink it.

Shepherds were unclean. More than that they were unclean. What do I mean by that? Well, not only were they dirty, and dusty, but society looked down on them as some of the lowest people. Society looked down on them as deluded, weak-minded, ignorant people. Not free-thinking, enlightened, rational minded people. Does that sound familiar?

1 Isaiah 62:4

2 John 15:18

3 Isaiah 62:12

Shepherds were, in the eyes of many, disgusting people. No one wanted to be seen spending time with shepherds. They were nobodys. People no one cared about. They were people who belonged in stables, and around smelly animals. They didn't deserve to be allowed into nice places. They weren't good enough. Does that sound familiar?

Yet when God gave the angels orders to tell His children of the birth of His Son, who did He send them to? The kings, emperors, and the greatest people of that day? No. He sent the angels to shepherds. He sent the angels to the smelly people.

Why did Jesus come? He came to claim you. He came to call you His own. He came to save you. He came to redeem you. He came to wash you and make you clean. You see you are smelly people. Who are you to walk in great halls like the throne room of almighty God? Who are you to stand the courts of the Lord's house? Who are you to even be seen in the presence of Jesus? None of us are worthy to do these things.

We don't live perfect lives. We mess up all the time. We forget God, we forget our faith, we forget ourselves and our conduct all the time. What do we know about proper etiquette before a king in his court? I wouldn't know the first thing about how to act, or what to do. I, like all of you, was not raised in royal courts, or among upper class people. We don't belong in a place like that. We just don't fit in there. We'd look and feel clumsy and out of place.

So why did Jesus come? Certainly not because we are so wonderful and so deserving that He just wanted to come and be with us. Certainly not because we are free-thinking, enlightened, rational minded people. Certainly not because the world calls us great people. He came because He loved us. That is what Paul is teaching Titus.

Something you may not know about Titus. He was an older man. A man who had a career, but after coming to faith through the Word taught to him by Paul he decided to become a pastor. The letter to Titus, is a letter Paul wrote to help teach Titus the things he needed to teach his congregation.

Listen to his words again:

When God our Savior made his kindness and love for humanity appear, he saved us, but not because of anything we had done to gain his approval. Instead, because of his mercy he saved us through the washing, in which the Holy Spirit gives us new birth and renewal. God poured a generous amount of the Spirit on us through Jesus Christ our Savior. As a result, God in his kindness has given us his approval and we have become heirs who have the confidence that we have everlasting life.<sup>4</sup>

Paul is telling Titus to teach the people, that God is a God for all people not just the highest class of people, but for all people. That is why Jesus came. God doesn't do things by accident. Everything He does has purpose and meaning. He did not send His angels to the shepherds without a good reason.

4 Titus 3:4-7

The reason was to tell you that if He came for them, the lowest people, then He came for you too. He didn't come because you were clean, He came to clean you up. He didn't come because you were special, He came to make you special. He didn't come because you were holy, He came to make you holy.

We are the smelly people. We don't belong in high courts, and royal houses, but because of Jesus, we are cleaned up, made special, made holy, made worthy to walk in the courts of the Lord's house.<sup>5</sup> More than that He gave you the right to be called children of God.<sup>6</sup> Not just people worthy to walk in high courts, but God's own children. You don't have to approach God in fear, or as an outsider. You can walk right up to your heavenly Father and just chat with Him. You don't need to worry about ceremony and observance of protocol. You can just walk in any time and talk to Him.

That is why Jesus came. That holy precious little baby, whose birth we celebrate today, came because His care for you compelled him to. He came into the muck and the mire of this world to save you. He came to a stinky, smelly, stable because He wanted everyone to know that we are all worthy to approach Him. As fearlessly as one approaches a new born baby.

That is the meaning of Christmas: the birth of the Christ-child. Through Him and Him alone we receive salvation from the staining dross<sup>7</sup> of this world, and ultimately, life in a new world where the mire of sin will never touch us again.

That is God's promise to us. A promise we see today, in the face of a new born baby, born in a stable, in a little village called Bethlehem. So many years ago.

Amen.

5 Psalm 116:16-19

6 John 1:12

7 'Dross' is impurity in material. For example the dross from processing Gold is the foreign material that is removed to make the gold pure. (Psalm 119:119)