

Sermon for Christmas Eve

Date: December 24, 2021

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

Old Testament: Isaiah 9:2–7

Epistle Reading: Titus 2:11–14

Gospel Reading: Luke 2:1–20

Sermon Text: Isaiah 9:2–7

Sermon Title: In Time, As Promised



Introit: Psalm 93:1–2, 5; antiphon: Isaiah 9:2

Psalm: Psalm 96

Hymns:

O Great I Am, Almighty Word

LSB 379 – O Come, All Ye Faithful

LSB 384 – Of the Father's Love Begotten

LSB 359 – Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

LSB 357 – O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

LSB 332 – Savior of the Nations, Come

LSB 361 – O Little Town of Bethlehem

LSB 390 – Let Us All with Gladsome Voices

LSB 370 – What Child is This

LSB 363 – Silent Night Holy Night

Liturgy:

Special



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Text: Isaiah 9:2–7

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined. You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil.

For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

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Grace and peace to you from the Prince of Peace, Jesus the Holy Christ of God. Amen.

Fairy tales begin with, “Once upon a time.” The Christmas Gospel begins with, “And it came to pass in those days.” Fairy tales occur in mythical lands. The Gospel occurs in the real town of Bethlehem, during the actual reign of Caesar Augustus and Governor Quirinius. It is actually important for us to recognize the difference. Around Christmas our culture focuses on the make-believe, the magic, and the fantasy. Those things can certainly have their proper place, but it seems the “stuff” of Christmas: the lights, gifts and music, can become a flight into an imaginary world, a temporary retreat from the real world and real life. That is the exact opposite of the Christmas Gospel. Luke emphasizes what he is writing is a real event in history. It actually occurred in a real place, at a real time, when certain real officials were in power. It isn’t a legend, a myth or a fable.

Christmas is about our life in the real world being redeemed and renewed by the Lord who has come to save us. It is about the real Son of God, through whom all things were created,¹ entering into His own creation as a Baby boy, with real flesh and blood. Christmas about a first-time mom giving birth to Him in the most humble of circumstances, among real livestock, straw and smell. It’s about the Lord-of-all taking on the form of a servant² and being laid in a cattle trough, as He takes to the field of battle to rescue us from sin and sin’s affect. There is nothing pretend or imaginary about Christmas. Jesus is the very tangible love of God who has come to walk among us.

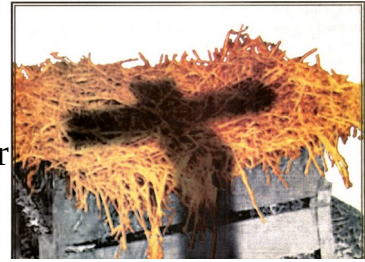
Christ was born among animals for us. Because of sin we have become like animals: survival of the fittest, self-preservation at all costs, following our base instincts and desires. We have all fallen away from God, wanting to go our own way and do our own thing. Ignoring or rejecting God’s Holy Word. In the process we have become inhuman from God’s point of view. To save us Jesus, the Son of God, took on our human nature. The One who slept near the beasts came to lift us out of our inhumanity and set us free from the beastly dark powers of death and the devil. Jesus descended to the depths of our fallenness to raise us to the heights of heaven and eternal life with Him.

In the stable with the animals, we see Jesus as the new Adam,³ who has come to restore us, to recreate us, to make us born again from above.⁴ By Jesus’

1 John 1:3
2 Philippians 2:7
3 1 Corinthians 15:45
4 John 3:3

conception and birth He has sanctified (holy-ified) and purified us. God has greatly exalted us by becoming true man our Brother.

He did that so He could take our place under Torah Law⁵ to free us from its unachievable requirements and condemnation. Jesus' lowly birth foreshadows the humble life He would lead, and the shameful death He would suffer in our place. The wood of a manger would later be traded for the wood of a cross. Just as Jesus was wrapped in strips of cloth at His birth,⁶ so also He would be wrapped in strips of cloth⁷ at His death.



The Son of God was born among us, and became man, for this very purpose: to die. To die in our place, to shed His blood for the ransom and purchase of us from the powers of darkness.

He was like us in every way, but without sin, so He could be the one time perfect sacrifice for all sin. As true man He was our substitute in death; as true God He paid the infinite price our sins required. Only in this fully divine man is there eternal life. Only in this child, who was laid in a manger, and who is now bodily raised from the dead, is there salvation. Only He could accomplish it.

The angel tell us of our only real hope.

Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of 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.⁸

Fear not! Do not be live in terror any more. No fear of death or of God's judgment. Your sins are forgiven. You have been cleansed by this Holy Birth. Christ the Savior has come to rescue you from the devil's prison-house to bring you into the eternal kingdom of God. Light has broken and shattered the darkness forever. Rejoice in that good news! All of this is for you! "For unto you is born..."⁹ the angels said.

The angels certainly rejoiced over what God was doing for us. After announcing the good tidings of great joy to the shepherds, a whole multitude of the heavenly host spilled over heaven's edge and brightened the skies with praise, singing:

5 The Law of Moses. The Old Testament or Old Contract.

6 Luke 2:7

7 Luke 23:53

8 Luke 2:10

9 Luke 2:11

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among those with whom Hble is
pleased!¹⁰

The very coming of Christ is a sign of God's good will toward us. It reminds us He wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.¹¹ Only Jesus brings real peace. Not pretend peace but eternal peace with God. In Jesus, we who were once at war with God are now reconciled and put right with Him. Those who believe and are Baptized into the body of Christ are reunited with God.¹² Truly, Jesus is the Prince of Peace.

The shepherds were given a sign: "... a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."¹³ You also are given a sign of where to find Jesus. He is found humbly manged in the bread and wine of the Sacred Sacrament of holy Communion. You don't need to go to great lengths to experience closeness to the Christ Child. The living nativity is here, because Jesus is here, concretely and tangibly. He is truly present on the altar in Holy Communion. The bread and the wine are His manger, in which His Body and Blood are truly present¹⁴ to bring to you all the blessings of this holy night.

Tomorrow at our Christmas Day service you will be in Bethlehem. 'Bethlehem' means "The House of Bread." He who is the Living Bread from heaven¹⁵ comes down to make this place a house of bread, a Bethlehem, to satisfy your spiritual hunger and to fill you with His life.

We humbly eat of the Holy Body and Blood of Christ so that our humanity may be eternally restored in Him who is truly human and truly divine. Let us with Mary keep and ponder all these things in our heart¹⁶ in repentance and faith. Then let us with the shepherds glorify and praise God for all the things we have heard and seen.¹⁷

Amen.

10 Luke 2:14
11 1 Timothy 2:3-4
12 Mark 16:16
13 Luke 2:12
14 John 6:54-55
15 John 6:51
16 Luke 2:19
17 Luke 2:16-17

**Proclaim God's Word,
Encourage one another in faith,
Witness to God's love and
Serve all people**

