

“News of God’s Love”

Luke 2: 1-20

Our Scripture this morning comes from the Gospel of Luke, second Chapter, verses 1-20 and can be found on page 54 in your pew Bible if you wish to follow along...

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. ⁵He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.

Okay, wait. Something is missing this morning....Let’s see. I know what’s missing...We need a few people who are willing to hope to their communities, people who know that the Kingdom of God doesn’t play by the rules governed by power and might, people who know that God is at work in this world, people who have the courage and the strength to be a part of that work...

Oh...you’ll do nicely. Now do you know your part in bringing about the good news? Well, just follow me....We’ll figure out together.

(have the people go back to the back of the sanctuary, put on the costumes of Mary and Joseph)...Okay just wait here for a minute.

Now we are ready for today's sermon...

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No...no...something is still missing. Oh I know. We are missing people who are willing to tell the good news, people who are willing to share stories about their faith, stories about how God brought about new life in their lives, stories about how God surprised them. We are missing people who are excited to tell the world about how God is bringing about healing and wholeness, bringing about tidings of great joy for all of God's people?

I've got it! Just give me a minute.

(Pass out angel halos and wings to people.) Now do you know your part in bringing about the good news? Okay, we will figure it out together. You can stay in your seats for now.

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No, wait...something is still missing. Let me see...

(Go back to grab the camel)

Is this is? No that's not it. Sorry guy. You'll have to wait a few more weeks until we have some visitors from the East join us. I think there will be three of them, bringing some gifts fit for a king. You usually show up around Epiphany.

Okay so if that is not it, what are we missing? Oh I know! We are missing people who are willing to be caretakers of and for God's people, people who are willing to share God's love and grace. People who will tend to the hurts and brokenness of this world, the pain and suffering caused by division and hate. We are missing

people who will go to the margins of our communities and welcome and embrace those that they find there, invite them to the Table because these caretakers see all people as Beloved Children of God, created in the image of God and loved more than they could ever imagine.

I've got it! Just give me a minute.

(Pass out shepherds crooks to people.) Now do you know your part in bringing about the good news? Okay, we will figure it out together. You can stay in your seats for now.

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No, wait...something is still missing. Let me see...

We need something which will tie this all together, something which will bring people together, something which will remind us of the abundance of God's grace and love, something that transforms our understanding, something that is so simple yet it reframes our story as people of faith?

Oh I've got it...

Hang on...

(Place the manger)

Now we are ready for today's sermon...

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In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered.

Joseph (JOSEPH comes forward) also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary (MARY comes forward with doll or baby) to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a

child. 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.

(Pause for a moment, look to the family, then look back to the congregation).

In that region, there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. (NARRATOR pauses, looks to MARY and JOSEPH)

You know, we need some shepherds to come up here and stand around Mary and Joseph. Anyone who wants to be a shepherd, come on up. (Wait for the shepherds to come forward).

Then, an angel of the Lord stood before them! (Wait for the ANGEL OF THE LORD to come forward and stand to the side) And the glory of the Lord shown around them, and they were terrified! But the angel said to them, Fear not! For see, I bring you tidings of great joy to all the people! For to 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 child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.

NARRATOR And suddenly, there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host. Angels—we need some angels to be our heavenly host! Any angels want to come forward? (Wait for the angels to come forward and have them stand opposite of the ANGEL OF THE LORD, on the other side of the Holy Family and the shepherds and sheep).

So there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace, and goodwill to all

NARRATOR When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which God has made known to us!

NARRATOR So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. (Pause for a moment)

For Luke this snapshot of ordinary people doing extraordinary things is where the good news begin. Notice that "the sign the shepherds received [which announced the good news] is not a supernova or even the angel. It is those bands of cloths, the manger, and the baby. The refusal to offer signs of supernatural status fits within Luke's infancy stories. The sign to Mary was the pregnancy of her cousin Elizabeth. Once we figure out the sign [pointing us to the good news in our midst] whether of a pregnant woman, of a mother who has just given birth, of a newborn, even of baby clothes or a stable, our next step is to work out the symbolism, or what that sign 'signifies'. If we can start to look for the light of the divine in front of our eyes rather than search the stars, we'll be ready when we hear stories of sowers and seeds, vines and fig trees, yeast and fish. Signs [of the Kingdom of God] are all around us, if we take the time to look."

“This is the Good News: that today and every day, a Savior has come for us. We remember this old, old story, and that this story is alive in us, for we are the body of Christ. Remember this picture, this Nativity, filled with ordinary people doing extraordinary things, for this is the story of the good news, a story which continues today and all days for us as the people of God. Amen,