

Stop and Treasure Christ, and Share

Various readings

Well, it all seems a bit rushed. Uncertain. How can anything good come from a rushed time with so many unknowns? I could be talking about what it's been like trying to plan for Christmas this year with all the COVID changes; but I'm not. I could be talking about the struggle this year has been, when we've been separated from loved ones whom we long to see at Christmas. Making plans on the fly as COVID restrictions come and go. But I'm not. I could be talking about all the struggles we've had here with the changes to be able to return to worshipping together in this church. But I'm not.

I'm talking about the coming of Jesus, the coming of God as human being; Jesus' arrival. Have you ever pondered how anything good could come from something rushed and humanly uncertain? Stop for a moment and ponder with me... Mary and Joseph arriving in Bethlehem, and there being no place for them; no place for Mary to give birth. Joseph running from Inn to BNB and to the next hotel in search of a room, as Mary is about to give birth. How can anything good come from this, when they didn't even know the place where Jesus was to be born? How can anything good come after an arduous journey, which likely took at least 5 days and more likely 7, given that Mary was so close to giving birth. The journey would have been taken in the winter time, when there is lots of rain and freezing temperatures at night. The trip was uphill and down dale, and seems to have provided enough bumps along the way to bring on Mary's labour. And then they arrive in Bethlehem, which is heaving with travellers and visitors, like a border town just after the border has been re-opened. But everyone is there for the census, and there's no room! No room in the Inn. How could anything good come of it?

Well, after such a journey... maybe we can liken our journey through 2020 to this. After all of this, Jesus is born on earth for you.

And in our reading from Luke 2, the angel of the Lord and a heavenly host of angels put this time and this event in its right and wonderful place, as they come to a mob of local shepherds in the neighbourhood:

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. [This was sudden, too, it seems.] 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 Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord."

The angel says to the terrified, startled and uncertain shepherds that they need not fear because Jesus has arrived. Jesus, the Son of God, is on earth. And the news is good. God is here for people. For them...for all.

"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 Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord."

This is news for you and me and for the whole world this Christmas 2020, after the year that's been. This news is for you and me anew, right now!

Jesus is here! Immanuel — God with us. Jesus, Saviour — God for us. For you... to you who have lived through this year and all its changes and difficulties; for you who have learned a new speed of change and a new story of uncertainty in 2020; for you is born in the city of David, a Saviour who is Christ the Lord.

So how do you receive this news this Christmas Eve, 2020? What does it mean for you this year? May I encourage you to do two things:

1. Shhh. Hush, and listen. Just as we were encouraged as we started worship tonight... shhh ... Can you hear it? It's good news. And not just any good news. But good news of great joy from God, and it's for you and for all people. A Saviour is born and he is Christ the Lord, for you!

Join with Mary, and as you receive this news this year, ponder it in your heart after the journey that 2020 has been. Sit with Jesus tonight as you sit and worship. Sit with Jesus who comes for you. And with Mary, treasure this in your heart.

2. As you receive this news for you, like the shepherds in the field, go with them and with this news urgently to others. Let's join those shepherd messengers too, then.

So they went with haste [no longer terrified, afraid, or startled] 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.

Take the news, and speak to the people you hold close to your heart. Speak from your heart the good news for them, that on this holy night, the darkness of COVID and the darkness of sin, death and the evil one is overcome. Christ, the light and life of the world is here for you, for me, for all. God's very best! Treasure it; and share it with joy. Amen.

Video of the service including the above sermon: https://youtu.be/yASMgk_Xk3Q