

Pastor Matthew Ude
The First Sunday After Christmas
December 29th, 2019

When the Lights are Gone the Savior Remains

The Word - The Signs - The Child

Luke 2:8-20 ⁸ Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. ¹⁰ Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. ¹¹ "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² "And this *will be* the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" ¹⁵ So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶ And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. ¹⁷ Now when they had seen *Him*, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. ¹⁸ And all those who heard *it* marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. ¹⁹ But Mary kept all these things and pondered *them* in her heart. ²⁰ Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.

My wife and I just celebrated our seventh wedding anniversary. It was a lot of fun and meant a lot but only because of what we have the rest of the year. That one day a year is a celebration of something deeper, otherwise the celebration would be empty and meaningless.

If I let her my wife would leave the lights and Christmas tree up year round. But eventually the tree has to come down, the lights have to come down, they don't last. What is left when the lights are gone? If Christmas is a celebration for celebrations sake than when its over there is nothing left. But it is a celebration of something deeper. Something that remains even when the celebration is over. It is a celebration of something that is with us all year.

The preaching of Good News

The light fades, the angles disappear, and what is left?

Luke 2:15 Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.

The glory of the Lord shone around them. The heavenly hosts of angels sang from the sky. But that was only for a minute. When the lights are gone the message remains. For there is born to you this day a Savior

This happens continually throughout the gospels.

Peter, James and John see Christ in all his glory on the mount of transfiguration, but then the glory departs and what are they left with? "This is my beloved Son, listen to Him."

The women see angels on Easter Sunday morning, but the angels depart and what are they left with? The good news, "He is not here for He is arisen, go to Galilee as he said."

The Emmaus disciples walk with the Lord and break bread with Him, but then He departs, He vanishes, what are they left with? The word which he explained to them on the way. The scriptures had been opened to their eyes and they were able to see Christ in every page of the Old Testament. They were able to see the forgiveness of their sins. And that word "burned within their hearts"

This happens constantly to us in our lives. We have this days or moments when we feel the glory of the Lord around us. Or at least what we think is the Glory of

the Lord. We have Christmas Eve when the church is full, and the children sang so wonderfully. We have Christmas day when we open our presents and we are together with our families. At these times we are filled with joy and love. We come to church and sing our favorite hymns and we feel joy. We feel the glory of the Lord.

But these moments are short and fleeting. Christmas is one day out of 365, and the Christmas tree lasts only a month at most. What is there to sustain us, to keep us, when the lights and the joy and the presents and the food is gone? The good news. The good news, the joyful news, the wonderful announcement that a Savior is born for you and me.

The signs of His presence

The angels said to the shepherds, “this will be the sign to you, You will find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger”

If we compare this to other signs in scripture it rather comes up lacking. God gave the ten plagues and the opening of the red sea to the Israelites. To Joshua He made the earth stand still. For Elijah fire came down from heaven. The three men walked around in a fire.

What do we have here as far as signs go? An infant wrapped up in cloth? That’s every infant in the history of the World; the first thing you do is wrap it up tightly. That is what they teach you in baby classes. How to change a diaper and how to wrap it up?

And “laid in a manger.” This is a little unusual, but by no means a miracle. Where’s the fire from heaven? Where’s the halo?

But you see the difference is it’s not that kind of a sign. The purpose of this sign isn’t to be a miracle. The purpose of the sign isn’t to prove that this is the Christ. The purpose is merely to let you know where He is.

If you want proof that he is the Messiah, you've got the angels speaking from heaven. You've got the choirs proclaiming His birth. Are you really going to be so foolish to join Zacharias in doubting the angels when they tell you a Savior is born for you?

No the purpose of the sign is not a miracle to prove who He is, but a name tag so the shepherds can find Him. How will they know which babe is the one the angels were talking about? He will be the one in Bethlelem in a manger.

We may or may not have seen miracles in our lives. But when the miracles are gone, where are the signs of His presence?

"This is my body and my blood." There is nothing outwardly miraculous here, but this is where we can come and find Christ.

Do you want to follow the shepherds to the manger? Do you want to come with them and kneel and worship and hold the Christ child?

Here he is, in the wine and the bread.

The shepherds were told to look for a child in a manger. We are told to look for the preaching of the Word and the sacraments. Where these things are Christ is there.

A child born for YOU

I did a wedding out in LA years ago. The wedding party like normal was standing there in front of me, and so I couldn't really see much else. I Found out afterwards no one was listening to a word I was saying, because the flower girl was apparently messing around and doing some antics right behind the wedding party. Everyone was watching her.

Kids often steal the show. If I brought Kaylee up here you would probably pay more attention but not necessarily to anything I was saying. It's easy to for children to steal the show. Buy no child has ever stolen the show so completely as this child.

The shepherds heard the choirs of heaven. Imagine how beautiful their singing was. Imagine how perfect their harmony must have been.

But Luke makes it clear that the topic of their conversation was not the angels or how beautifully the angels sang, no the topic of the conversation which they talked about was the child.

Luke 2:17 ¹⁷ Now when they had seen *Him*, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child.

Luke goes to great lengths to emphasize that the main thing the Shepherds wanted to talk about was not the angels or how well they sang, the thing they wanted everyone to know was who this child was.

“For there is born to You, A SAVIOR who is Christ the Lord.”

I think the kids did an amazing job on Christmas Eve. I think the teachers did an amazing job teaching them all those songs. And probably the parents helped out a lot. But as beautiful as the kids were it is nothing compared to the message they had to share:

“There is born to you a Savior” That is what truly made their songs glow with the glory of the Lord.

That is what makes our hearts glow everyday with the glory of the Lord.

When the angels and the lights are gone, the child is still ours.

Amen