

Christmas Is for Everyone

Sermon for Christmas Eve

Sermon Text: Luke 2:10-11



¹⁰ And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

I don't want to give up Christmas or the atmosphere in the Christmas market or the music... or the magical time when everything is quiet and almost everyone goes inside to spend precious time with their families. And yet the Christmas season in particular is also associated with a great deal of sorrow and suffering so that I have to at least ask myself the question: What do I think of Christmas?

Let's first take a look at the people that appear during the first Christmas. For one thing, there were the shepherds. The shepherds approached the manger in the dark. The darkness was their profession and somehow also fit their entire life because they were isolated from other people. They probably stank and had a special language that the others considered uneducated. In fact, they tended to be avoided. They came to the manger out of the darkness and I imagine that they had budding hope, could it be that life was taking a turn for the better?

The wise men from the East couldn't have been more different. They were educated, yes, they even went to Jesus because of their education. Their knowledge and study of the star led them to the manger. But they were also greatly mistaken – Jesus wasn't to be found in the king's house, but among poor people. Perhaps one of them asked: How could we have been so wrong? Can it be that this Jesus will turn everything we used to know upside down?

And then there were also Mary and Joseph. Joseph just became a father, but he noticed long before this that Jesus thoroughly messed up his plans. And he questions: Will Jesus fit in with us? Will he be one of us? Mary was overwhelmed. She had heard this long before from the angel Gabriel who Jesus was going to be. She knew, like no other at the manger, that Jesus was special. She carried Him in her heart and longed to be close to Him, to care for Him... her greatest wish was for Him to remain in her heart and she in His.

These people that were around the manger at that time couldn't have been more different. They also had different feelings, different hopes, and different expectations. Today, I challenge you to stand where the others were: the shepherds, the wise men, Mary, and Joseph. Who do you identify with? Or maybe you think that there is no place for you at the manger because you can't belong to it. If you think that, you already identified yourself with the shepherds because they thought exactly that. Or are you one of the others who were nearby? Maybe even convinced that you are on the right track only to find that you were wrong, just as the wise men had been. It is interesting that such different people find Jesus at the manger. Jesus wants to show us that the manger is meant for this – there is enough room at the manger for all kinds of people. But there is not just room for all the various people, there is also room for all their different experiences. Yes, you and I, we all have different experiences with Jesus. There are days when we feel so very close to Him and days when we feel more distanced from Him. Where do you think it is right for you to stand at the manger? I notice for myself that it is possible to stand in different spots. How I relate to Jesus is

constantly changing, depending on what I experience, with myself, with the church too. As in every relationship, there are sometimes hurts... sometimes I need some distance or I have the feeling that I no longer belong here. And then I'm amazed at myself, "it used to be entirely different! And I used to feel so differently about it!" Or maybe you think that you are an outsider anyways and that it doesn't have anything to do with you. Or are you one of those who needs a lot of closeness, love, and affection especially now... like Mary who carried Jesus within her heart.

With all this going on around the manger, we haven't given someone the chance to speak. And that is Jesus Himself. What does Jesus say to them all? At the manger, Jesus as a baby still can't speak, that's obvious. But we know from His later life what He might have said. Jesus, as an adult, said: "Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. 11:28) Jesus wants to tell us that **everyone** is allowed to be there. And in doing so, He doesn't make any conditions or exceptions at all. **All** are invited. So, we may **all** come, exactly as we are – with questions, doubts, fears... with hurts, disappointments... even with disbelief. Jesus makes no distinction. Even when He was born, Jesus invited the shepherds as well as the wise men and everyone else. And through this, Jesus shows us what His ultimate goal is. His ultimate goal is to be close and to share our life with us. Jesus is there! Jesus is there for you! Jesus is there for everyone! That is Christmas. Amen.