

Christ Episcopal Church

2 Emerson Road

East Norwalk, Connecticut 06855

Christmas Eve (C)

December 24, 2018

A Sermon by the Rev. Joe Parrish

“Go Tell It on the Mountain”

DRAFT

Luke 2:1-20

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 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, 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.

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. 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 Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.’ And suddenly 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 among those whom he favors!’

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 the Lord has made known to us.’ 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.

Dear Lord, let us hear tonight the wonderous story of the Birth of our Savior and tell it to everyone we meet. Jesus Christ is born to bring salvation to the world.
Amen.

Freaked out. Freaked out. That is the first thing that would occur to me if my wife had just had her first baby in a shepherd's stall and suddenly a bunch of smelly shepherds arrived to say that an angel had appeared to them and told them, "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 Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.”” Then the whole heavenly host appears and begins to praise God. Freaked out is the phrase that comes to my mind, both for the Holy Family and the shepherds.

Apparently, that this angel who announced this very best of news did not appear to the Holy Family but instead appeared to shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem, is remarkable. The Holy Family

surely had more than inklings of this Good News already since an angel had appeared separately to both Mary and Joseph earlier to let them in on this amazing event that was about to take place.

But that this scenario is given in the Gospel of Luke is a wonderous story indeed. Luke must have scoured the annals of the area of Bethlehem to find this precious story which we tell every Christmas. It is not in any of the other Gospels, but Luke who wrote this last of the Gospels probably could not contain himself as he writes down this amazing story. What joy. What Joy.

And as we recite the Nicene Creed in a few minutes, we hear this Good News for all history told in a single sentence, “For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary and was made man.” A brief mention is all it gets, and then in that Creed we note next that Jesus was crucified. Bang. Born. Died. Bang.

That this Savior had come “for our salvation” is all the reason needed. We need salvation. We must have salvation; everyone needs salvation, and we Christians of all people have this spectacular news.

How can we not go out and ‘tell it on the mountain’, that Jesus Christ is born.

Maybe tell it to just one other person. Or maybe two, or maybe tell everyone we come into contact tonight and tomorrow. This miraculous story needs to be told and retold everywhere we can. Go tell it on the mountain. Announce this Good News everywhere.

This is “The Good News”. And everyone needs access to it. Let them decide whether it is for them or not. But our task is to ‘tell it out’ to the world. Go tell it on the mountains.

Amen.

Description:

Jesus was born to Mary and Joseph in a lowly shepherd's hut in Bethlehem. Angels announced this birth to shepherds. They came and told the Holy Family what had been told them. We need to tell others.

Tags:

Christmas, shepherds, field, angel, multitude, Holy, Family, salvation, birth, Jesus, Christ, Bethlehem

St. John's Episcopal Church

61 Broad Street

Elizabeth, New Jersey 07201

Christmas Mass

December 24, 1997

A Sermon by the Rev. Joe Parrish

The Holy Gospel according to

Luke 2:1-20

Lord Jesus, come into our hearts this day.

Amen.

Someone commented that in their church
Christmas pageant the baby Jesus is played

by a forty-watt lightbulb. Perhaps that is what we can salvage from the Christmas story, that Jesus is the light of the world!

In our Christmas creche over there the roof of the creche is made of cardboard, yes, cardboard. It looks like wood because it is painted brown, but the original wooden roof was damaged beyond repair a couple of years ago, and one of our parishioners replaced it with thick cardboard. It reminds me of the cardboard boxes in which many people have slept in our church cemetery here in the middle of the city. Housing costs a minimum of \$350 per month around here; one night in a motel nearby is \$40. We

could indeed be the place Jesus' mother and father could find no place to live indoors for one night or more, especially if they did not have at least \$40 to spend. Around here they would probably have to stay in a church cemetery. Next door we have a piano factory which brings in imported pianos from Korea and elsewhere, packed in huge cardboard boxes. Our Sunday School children used one of these boxes in their production of "Scrooge" a couple of years ago--it was painted to look like a fireplace in Scrooge's house--you may remember it. It's still in the Parish Hall.

Many times, we clear out one of these big cardboard boxes out of our cemetery after it has been used as a temporary house for some transient person. And we cut up one of those boxes to make the roof of the Christmas creche scene over here in the church. It reminds me of the humble abode of the baby Jesus and his parents on that first Christmas day. Maybe all twentieth century creches should have a cardboard roof to remind us of the humble beginnings of our Lord.

Perhaps tonight you have an emptiness in your heart waiting for the Christ child to enter. You may not have prepared enough

spiritually for Christmas, most of us haven't. All the hustle and bustle of Christmas buying often leaves us somewhat empty inside, wondering what all the fuss was all about. We too may have a humble beginning in our heart for the coming of the Savior of the world. But that will not discourage him. Remember he did not stay in the Waldorf Astoria that first night of his life. Some say it was a cave, others say it was a stable. The gospel of Luke only says he was lying in a manger, a humble feed trough for farm animals, just high enough off the ground that baby animals could safely be put there so the hooves of the adult

animals would not injure their offspring. It would be difficult to be born in more modest surroundings.

But that gives us all hope. Even when we have that Christmas emptiness in our hearts Jesus will find a place to stay with us, within us, within our own hearts. He is the gift we all really and truly desire. He is the only one who can fill our hearts full with his love. He is the only one who accepts us just as we are, no pretenses are needed. Jesus is indeed the light of the world, and our light, too.

So, tonight look at the creche and think on the meaning of Christmas for you. Jesus

came that we might have life. Jesus came that we might have life eternal with him. He came, he died, he rose again, and he now sits on the right hand of God the Father. Put your faith in him. He will save you. He will come into your heart this very night, this very minute. Don't wait. He is looking for a place to stay. Let him stay in your heart.

May God bless you. Have a merry Christmas. Amen.