

All Saints Steenrijk Episcopal Church

Willemstad, Curacao

And

The Wave Sentinel

British Deep Ocean Cable Repair Ship

Curacao Harbor

Willemstad, Curacao

Christmas (C)

December 25, 2022

A Sermon by the Rev. Joe Parrish

“Pulled into the Water”

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 the wonderful 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.

The Wave Sentinel is nearly a football field in height and many football fields long. Its crew of fifty respond all over the

southern hemisphere to breaks in the deep ocean communication cables and also the wind farm cables bringing electricity from their ocean locations to land. They cover a huge area, every thing from the Panama Canal to the tip of South America. They recently returned to Port Curacao from the coastline of Chile, on the other side of South America. Even though they are a huge ship, they are dwarfed by the enormous cruise ships that come from Europe and North America. As a result, they have to take the lowest position in getting through the Panama Canal, and they have to do that tortuous and demanding journey at night

with a seemingly unending 18 hour shift of all the crew. It took them two and a half days to reach Chile from Curacao. They are equipped to find a needle in a huge haystack. Most of the cables they repair are only as thick as one's thumb, and the cables they tend are buried in sand half a mile below the ocean surface. They use an unmanned cable guided submarine, underwater cameras, and incredibly sensitive tension meters to find the broken cable ends at the bottom of the ocean. The ends are brought on board the ship and meticulously repaired. The repaired cables are then carefully dropped back to the ocean

floor, and a series of underwater jets in the submarine rebury the repaired cable under a protective surface of sand.

I climbed up a 60 meter nearly vertical footbridge to come aboard to celebrate a Christmas Eucharist with the Captain and crew Friday evening, Christmas Eve Eve, noting that it was Christmas Eve at their home base of Southampton, England. My wife Jan turned around about 20 meters up the walkway, deciding that going up another 40 meters of the steep gang walk was not what she really wanted to do in the dark pitch black of Curacao Harbor. And when I came back down, I was thankfully

comforted by the ship's Captain who descended just in front of me, until he fast stepped down the last twenty meters as I climbed down ever so slowly with somewhat wobbly legs. I lost 3 pounds of weight that night with all the acrobatics I needed to do.

I told the sailors that they had many similarities to those shepherds watching their flock by night in the fields of Bethlehem. But the shepherds had the leading of a heavenly host of angels and a bright light, where as the cable repairers only had the dim light of an unmanned submarine to find their way to the broken

cable. And just as the sailors were charged to go to find and repair the lost and broken cable, the shepherds were charged to go find the lost baby in the crib who would repair the whole broken world.

The following is a story that I told those sailors: I sometimes get caught up in watching wildlife videos on Facebook; somehow these somewhat strange Facebook videos catch my attention from time to time. Some of them are violent, as nature is sometimes; a wandering zebra is surrounded by an undefeatable pack of wild dogs; a huge water buffalo is besieged by a pride of hungry lions.

In the latter story, the scene begins with five lions attacking the water buffalo at the site of an apparent victory of an earlier devoured buffalo carcass sunk halfway in the large water hole. The lions had found a perfect attractive spot of the buffalo.

I could not break away from this raw encounter. As I watched, with my heart actually pounding faster, the buffalo was at first stunned by all those five lions with their sharp claws and teeth attacking it. It was barely moving, perhaps planning how it might survive the fate of an earlier perhaps related victim. Then with a few strained efforts it slowly edged its way into some

slightly deeper water. But the lions were not phased; they had won once and they were simply using their same dig-in and hold-on strategy to wear their new victim down.

I could not tear myself away from the computer screen. I was rooting for the water buffalo, even though the actual events had likely transpired more than a year earlier.

The buffalo crouched down a bit, bringing the big cats slightly deeper into the water. The lions were unphased. The buffalo seemed to lose strength.

Then with a mighty effort, the buffalo took another step toward the deeper part of the waterhole. The lions clung on

tenaciously. The buffalo managed to free up one of its rather short stout horns, and tried to dislodge the lion closes to its head. At first nothing seemed to work. But somehow it was able to take one more step toward the center of the waterhole, and lo and behold, three of the back four lions lost their grip, maybe because of the slippery water.

Now only two big cats were clinging onto their victim. One more step of the buffalo dislodged the back lion, but the one at its neck could not be reached by the big animal's horns; it was clearly seeing victory ahead.

Then the tape suddenly ended.

By now, I am breathing heavily, wondering what may have been the outcome.

And just as suddenly, the taping began again a few minutes later. Now the buffalo was deeper into the water hole, but the lion at the buffalo's face was clearly not moving. Then, with some mighty effort, the buffalo was able to just catch the lion's neck and dislodge it; it swam a short distance away, yes, the lion could swim, but instead of reattacking, it swam further away. And the buffalo lived.

By now I am out of breath, my heart is beating wildly. I realized I had been praying for the safety of the buffalo in a scene that had probably happened months ago. Do prayers work timelessly, forwards as well as backwards, I do not know, but maybe.

I know God can see all things without reference to time; God can do anything. We humans do not have such powers.

In this epic struggle between life and death, death was defeated. The lions lived to hunt another day, and the buffalo lived to live another day.

But I could see in this struggle of life and death, that the saving power was in the

water, saving power was in the water. The buffalo innately knew water would work in its favor.

In this season of Christmas, water works in our favor. The little baby we remember on Christmas became our Savior, and he became the Savior of the world. He came not to judge, but to make a way for all to find the riches of heaven as we breathe our last breath. By our baptism, we are healed, healed for all eternity. We are cleansed from our sins, most of which will be committed after our baptism. Glory to God for that.

The waters that saved that buffalo have miraculously saved us from all those clinging sins, some of which seemed to be able to kill us either slowly or on the spot. But the God of the Waters, the God of the Floods, the God of the tempest oceans, the God of the Universe has heard our cries, our moans, our deep urgings to find the sacred. And God knew well in advance of our days that we would need a Redeemer, one who would pay the price for our many sins. And our Savior, born of a virgin, would defeat death and the grave. God will help us tear away the fierce hooks of sin, and the

seemingly undefeatable jaws of the lions of evil.

Christmas is a way we can remember that the small become mighty, the weak become strong, the poor are raised up, and the rich are sent empty away.

So today, if we are besieged by sins that seem to cling to us so fiercely, remember the God whose water of baptism can and has, washed us clean, giving us the utmost power to throw off the works of darkness and come to the everlasting light of God's incredible love.

The shepherds found the needle in the haystack, the baby in the manger, and then

went away praising God for the miracle shown by the angels.

By the power of our baptisms, let us pull up the tattered ends of our broken life, bring them to God who can heal all things, and put our lives back together to work again to love and serve our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

PS—the medical doctor I have been shadowing sent me this reflection:

“The author of Psalm 49 pointed to the foolishness of those who value possessions more than their souls. Instead, the psalmist looked to the LORD, confident that HE "will redeem my soul from the power of the grave" (v.15). It is because GOD values us so

much that God sent HIS SON JESUS to Earth as a baby. HE grew up and then died on the cross to pay the price to redeem us (Romans 5:6- 21). Just how much are we worth? All we have to do is look at Bethlehem's Cradle and the Calvary's Cross. CHRIST'S Death is the measure of our Worth to GOD. Let us NOT Forget the "Real Reason for the Season", Thanking God everyday for sending HIS SON JESUS to die for us that we may live. Blessings and PEACE 

- E Logan

Description:

Jesus was born to save us from all sins that may cling so tightly to us. Angels announced this birth to lowly shepherds. Let us hear their words and come to adore Him, Christ the Lord.

Tags:

Christmas, shepherds, angel, light, water, baptism