

## *Christmas Message and Prayer 2019*

December 24, 2019

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On Sunday I shared the Christmas story with the children. I opened by saying that the story begins with God, and God's love. God looked at the world and saw that it was a very dark place, with people being very mean to one another; and people were hurting and suffering, and God, *who loves us so much*, couldn't be an onlooker anymore. He wanted to be with us, to love us, and to show us *how* to love - so he became one of us. And, then I told the rest, with help from the children.

The wonderful thing about children's messages is how they're for the whole congregation. Turns out for the minister, too. When I got home from church, a member had sent me 4 nativity stories told by children, on video - check out YouTube! - which filled me with great joy. After a week of the dark world of politics, they came *at just the right time*. We've been posting the stories on the church's Facebook page. It's a wonderful thing to be captivated by the spirit of children, with their innocence and joy. All that light. They make Christmas new again, don't they? They bear light in our darkness. It's true, it's all about the simple and humble nativity - with its real, down to earth love. One video has a child remarking that the baby Jesus has two daddies - they both needed to look after the baby. Another video ends with everyone there in the stable, and a child comments, and there was a party! Yes, there most certainly was. In heaven and on earth.

The first video included child narrators with actors acting out what the children were saying. Imagine these scenarios: A child explains that the story begins with Mary doing the laundry when the angel Gabriel came to her. Later, we see the angel *sincerely* tell Joseph *that Mary is not lying*. A child tells that they rode a donkey, no a camel, and the video shows them in a golf cart with Mary saying, *this donkey is fast!* Later, we're told the shepherds had to walk through a bunch of grass and bushes, maybe have to camp out a nite, and it shows them fumbling with a camping tent.

A few children explain that the three kings bring a stuffed animal, diapers and wipes, some milk, some shoes, some Jordans, and... some gold, frankenstein and myrrh. One child questions how Jesus could survive in that barn - it was too stinky, too crowded, too ick. The video closes with Mary looking down at her baby and says, *Thank you for coming*. A king coos, *he's adorable*. A shepherd beams, *he's gonna be our best friend*. Proud Joseph says, *I love you, you da best*

*baby I ever seen. There. I said it.* The video closes with a child who says, *the new baby is gonna change the world.*

Indeed.

I know that every year since God made that heaven to earth leap, we can't imagine the world any darker than it currently is. People say *where is God*. Well, in the same way that people wanted Jesus to be the kind of king who would overthrow and topple government, God may not always save us in the ways we think that God should save us. Beloved, can it be enough that he turned the light on in the darkness by *being here*, by loving us, and teaching us about love and forgiveness, fairness and peace, so that we would *spread* that message around the world?

Even when things don't appear to change for the better in the world, or in your personal life, can it be enough to know that *God is with us. God with you. You're not alone.*

To every cry of "O God", he answers a hundred times, "*I am here.*" *I am here. I am here.*

*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.* The little manger baby was and still is the promise of God's forever love for the world, God's forever love for you. Many think the world deserves God's anger, wrath, rage, and judgment.... but we are given love. Again and again.

It is for you that Jesus is being born... your hurts, your broken heart, your anger, your fear, your failings, your need, your love—that he will lay in the manger this holy night. He comes for *you*.

I told the children that as they open their gifts on Christmas to remember that Jesus is the best gift they will ever receive. He's gonna be your best friend. For your whole life.

Let us pray.

Loving God, you always know how we are; you know when we run off from you - in our loneliness, our grief, worry, fear, our pennilessness, our resentment, selfishness, and, yes, even our doubt – you find us wherever we are. And, love us.

Find us tonight, O God.

Help us to stand still on this silent night, and find us.

Thank you for loving us, thank you for so loving the world that you sent Jesus. We pray in the name of that baby Jesus, who will grow up and teach us to pray...

Amen.

