



NOW THERE WERE IN THE SAME
COUNTRY SHEPHERDS LIVING OUT
IN THE FIELDS, KEEPING WATCH
OVER THEIR FLOCK BY NIGHT.
AND BEHOLD, AN ANGEL OF THE
LORD STOOD BEFORE THEM,
AND THE GLORY OF THE LORD
SHONE AROUND THEM, AND THEY WERE
GREATLY AFRAID. THEN THE ANGEL SAID
TO THEM, "DO NOT BE AFRAID, FOR BEHOLD,
I BRING YOU GOOD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY
WHICH SHALL BE TO ALL PEOPLE."

LUKE 2:8-10 (NKJV)

Christmas 2019

As Christmas approaches once again, we return to those beloved stories of the Nativity of Jesus. I think about the theological depth of John's narrative as he describes how "the word became flesh and dwelt among us...." I think about the foreboding timbre of Matthew's birth story as he describes the bloody jealousy of Herod and the shadow of the empire over Jesus's entire life, beginning with the Lord's warning to Joseph to "get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt..." and then, after the return to Israel and being instructed once more in a dream, Joseph's decision to take his family away to the distant district of Galilee.

Each of these stories reveals something different to us about Jesus' life and identity, his passion and ministry. But for sheer wonder and beauty and a sense of the peaceful presence of God, there is no narrative more comfortable and comforting than Luke's Nativity. Here is the faithful submission of Mary to the will of God; the lyrical praise of God from Zechariah, Mary, and Simeon; and the humility of the holy family as they find shelter, she gives birth and "laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn."

Indeed, it is Luke's story which has been replayed year after year since 1965 on millions of televisions as families around the world tune in again and again to enjoy the story of a depressed Charlie Brown's desperate search for an answer to the commercialism of the holiday. Overwhelmed by despair and ostracized for his choice of a small and feeble tree for the annual Christmas play, Charlie Brown cries out for someone to explain to him the real meaning of Christmas. It is in the following moments that our hearts melt within once more as Linus takes center stage and recites Luke's narrative of the birth of Jesus.

Whichever story you enjoy most, take time to ponder the most gracious gift of God again: Emmanuel, the human face of God-with-us. Remember that this is no mere birth story; it is the beginning of the greatest story ever told: the reconciliation of the world with the God who created the cosmos and yearns for us to live in relationship with the Holy One and with one another.

Come, celebrate this gift of God with us:

A Blue Christmas Service, Sunday, December 22nd at 7:00 PM

Traditional Candlelight Christmas Eve Service, Tuesday, December 24th at
7:00 PM

By His Grace,

Pastor Tom