

Sermon: Christ Is Christmas

Text: Luke 2:1-14

Date: Sunday, December 24, 2017, 7:30p.m.

After Jesus was born, He was wrapped in strips of cloth and placed in a manger. A manger, of course, is a feeding trough from which donkeys, horses, and other animals eat. I don't know about you, but when I think of the manger I picture it made out of wood. But, more than likely it was made out of a large stone that had been carved out on the top in order to hold straw.

You know, it's interesting that Luke mentions the manger three times in just a few verses as he tells the story of Jesus' birth. This is kind of unusual don't you think? Why keep mentioning the manger over and over again? What's so important about it?

One reason is obvious: the manger points to Jesus' humble birth. On His first night on earth, the King of Glory, the Son of God, slept in a feeding trough that animals ate out of. We serve a humble and amazingly loving God.

But I think there's another reason why Luke mentions the manger so often. I think the manger—the feeding trough—points, as a sign—to what Jesus has come to do. He came to offer Himself as food for our souls. He came to satisfy a hunger in us that can't be satisfied any other way. This is a spiritual hunger. And without Jesus, we are spiritually dead! But Jesus said in John 6:35: "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

When we come first to Jesus, our spiritual selves come to life and we are born anew! And then, as we continue to come to Jesus throughout our entire lives, our spiritual selves are fed, refreshed, renewed. And we grow. We grow in our knowledge and love of God. We grow in our spiritual walk with God. We grow and we change.

In a few minutes we will celebrate Holy Communion. Matthew, Mark and Luke record taking bread at the Last Supper and saying, "This is my body, which is given for you." The manger—the feeding trough—is a sign of what Jesus came to do. He came to offer Himself as bread for our souls. He came to give us life. He came to satisfy a hunger in each of us that cannot be satisfied any other way.

Hear these words from Isaiah 9: "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined. For to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given..." This is why we light candles on Christmas Eve. In Christ, the Light of God has come into our dark world. And light always overcomes darkness.

Hate, violence, bigotry, war, poverty, disease, sin and even death seem like they rule the world—but they don't have the last word after-all. Because of Jesus, hate and evil will not prevail.

A few years ago, a friend of mine went to a nearby nursing home and went room to room, offering to read the Christmas story from the Bible. After reading, she prayed with the residents and then moved on to the next room. She came to a room that was dark; the lights were off and

the shades were drawn. She hesitated to go in but then she noticed a woman sitting on the edge of the bed in the darkness, her hands folded on her lap, as if she was waiting for someone. She asked the woman if she could come in and read the Christmas story, and the woman whispered, "Yes." After reading about the birth of Jesus, my friend prayed with the woman and then invited her to join in praying the Lord's Prayer. My friend then wished her a Merry Christmas and slipped out of the room. As she left, she heard the woman weeping quietly. She turned and stood in the door for a moment and heard the woman praying: "Lord, you didn't forget me. I prayed that You wouldn't forget me, and You didn't." My friend went back in the room, wrapped her arms around the woman, and held her as she wept.

There in the darkness, light had come. It came because Jesus Christ was born in a feeding trough in Bethlehem. It came because my friend had tasted of the Lord and had seen the Light and felt compelled to share it.

Christmas is God's gift to us. It's a gift of spiritual life and sustenance and a gift of Light, love, hope and grace. And the gift of Christmas comes to us with a mission, a calling, and a responsibility.

We are called to feed on the Word of God, accept the Light of Christ and then, Be the Body of Christ as we take Christ's Word and Light into the world.

May it be so! Praise God!

Let us pray: Lord, we accept your light, your love, your mercy, your grace and your Body and Blood shed for us. By Your Holy Spirit help us to reflect your light, walk in your light, read Your Word and take Your Light and Word into the world. In Jesus' name and for His sake we pray. Amen.