

CHRISTMAS EVE MEDITATION

“STANDIND ON YOUR KNEES”

Pastor Mike Corwin

TEXT: LUKE 2:1-20

I – THE CHRISTMAS STORY:

The prophecies have been proclaimed, the period of waiting is over. Tonight we celebrate the birth of a Savior who changed the world. Listen again to the true story of Christmas...

Luke 2:1-20 (CEB)

¹ In those days Caesar Augustus declared that everyone throughout the empire should be enrolled in the tax lists. ² This first enrollment occurred when Quirinius governed Syria. ³ Everyone went to their own cities to be enrolled. ⁴ Since Joseph belonged to David’s house and family line, he went up from the city of Nazareth in Galilee to David’s city, called Bethlehem, in Judea. ⁵ He went to be enrolled together with Mary, who was promised to him in marriage and who was pregnant. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for Mary to have her baby. ⁷ She gave birth to her firstborn child, a son, wrapped him snugly, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the guestroom.

⁸ Nearby shepherds were living in the fields, guarding their sheep at night. ⁹ The Lord’s angel stood before them, the Lord’s glory shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ The angel said, “Don’t be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people. ¹¹ Your savior is born today in David’s city. He is Christ the Lord. ¹² This is a sign for you: you will find a newborn baby wrapped snugly and lying in a manger.” ¹³ Suddenly a great assembly of the

heavenly forces was with the angel praising God. They said, ¹⁴ “Glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors.”

¹⁵ When the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, “Let’s go right now to Bethlehem and see what’s happened. Let’s confirm what the Lord has revealed to us.” ¹⁶ They went quickly and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they saw this, they reported what they had been told about this child. ¹⁸ Everyone who heard it was amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹ Mary committed these things to memory and considered them carefully. ²⁰ The shepherds returned home, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. Everything happened just as they had been told.

II – BABIES:

How can you not love babies? You just want to hold them and cuddle them and love on them forever. They reduce us to feelings of love we may not normally exhibit. We smile at them to get them to smile back and reduce ourselves to making sounds we would never otherwise think about making in public as we coo at them. You can’t help yourself from kissing their little cheeks or just sitting in a chair and rocking them. Babies have a special quality we sometimes lose as we grow up. I enjoy watching on Sunday morning when Kim Burgett brings her grandson Noah to church and I watch as he is claimed by various mothers in our congregation who hold him and hang on to him until the end of the service. Babies have the ability to make us slow down and enjoy a moment or two of life outside the chaos of the world. Babies can humble you.

This is the picture I get when I read the Christmas story from the book of Luke. During this Advent we have studied the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the birth of this baby. We’ve heard about the angel appearing to Mary and about her visit to Elizabeth when unborn babies jumped in the womb and recognized how special Mary’s child would be. We’ve heard about how Elizabeth gave birth to John the Baptist who was sent to prepare the way for Jesus. And in future weeks we will look at the visit of kings to the home of Jesus and his baptism and beginning of his ministry. But not tonight. Tonight we hear the story of the birth of Jesus as a small baby in a

stable surrounded by his mother Mary, her earthly husband Joseph, and a bunch of animals. Don't you just get a picture of solitude? Of the love Mary had as she gazed upon her child for the very first time? Joseph having the same reaction. God had fulfilled his promise to the people, had sent a Messiah, A Savior for all of Creation. But tonight Mary doesn't care who he truly is, or why he was born, she just knows a new love she has never felt before and she cradles the child to her chest and introduces him to human love.

III – SHEPHERDS AND ANGELS:

Then we are reminded of why he was born. We are reminded he is more than a newborn baby to be cuddled and cooed to. He was born to save us all.

The shepherds were in their fields watching over their flocks when the glory of God broke forth! First one angel, then a whole host of them as they sang to Good News and told them that the baby born to Mary was their Savior. The long foretold one who would save Israel and all others as well. Proclaiming and singing that God should be glorified for this action and his wish was to do good to all and have peace on earth. Not war, not hunger, not violence, not evil, but good will and peace.

It tells us that when the angels left the shepherds ran to the stable and looked at the baby themselves.

IV – PROPER STANCE:

It doesn't tell me this is what happened but I believe it in my mind anyhow. I believe that when the shepherds arrived, when they realized the angels had told them the truth, when they realized this little baby was to become the Savior of humankind, that there was only one reaction they could have had...the knelt down in his presence. Isn't that how it is portrayed in our art...in our nativities? In a couple weeks we will look at the visit of the Wise men and how when they entered the house where

Jesus was, they “fell on their knees” and worshipped him. And isn’t that the reaction we should all have before our Lord and our Savior?

I think my all-time favorite Christmas carol is “O Holy Night.” It’s not even in our hymnals anymore because people can’t sing it. But one of the verses tells us to “Fall on your knees, O hear the angels’ voices.” And it’s then that I am reminded of the proper stance I should take when it comes to recognizing my God, my Lord, and my Savior for who he is and what he’s done for me. I should be as smart as the shepherds and the Wise Men and fall on my knees and worship the awe and glory of it all!

V – STANDING ON YOUR KNEES:

Pastor Becky and I have been preaching to you about standing in the presence of Jesus when your time comes to meet him face to face. That you need to stand up and go through the trials and tribulations of this life to be able to stand in the next.

What I want to tell you tonight is that you have to kneel at that manger and the bottom of the cross before you can stand. Jesus came to accomplish what you couldn’t do for yourself. He came to bring you Salvation from sin and death, to make you right again in the eyes of God. Only he can do this. I don’t care how much you can accomplish, I don’t care how important you think you are, I don’t care how good you’ve been, or how much money you’ve given to charities. You are still a sinner in need of the Salvation that baby brought. You have no red “S” on your chest and can’t save yourself. Only the blood red cross where that baby died for you when he grew up has the power to do that.

What you must do to claim it is to humble yourself, fall on your knees in awe, cradle that little baby and allow your heart to be the manger he wants to live in.

You must kneel at the manger and the cross to stand in heaven.

AMEN