

Luke 2:1-21 Christmas Eve 12/24/18

If you have *frequently* heard me preach you know that I *frequently* proclaim this little message: “it’s not about you.” It’s the right message. Life and the faith are fundamentally not about you. They are not dependent upon your accomplishments or your achievements. They are not about you. But in saying that I am not saying that they do not include you. The message of the faith may not be dependent upon you, but without a doubt, it is meant for you.

The prophet Isaiah tonight says unto *us* a son is given; unto us a child is born. The reference in Isaiah is of a child being born to a king, meaning that the kingdom continues. We don’t know who for sure Isaiah is referring to, but we do hear the promise that leadership and the kingdom will go on. And this promise is meant for the people, has implications for the ordinary folks in the kingdom. Unto *us* a child is born. Unto *us* a son is given. We may not run the kingdom, but we are the recipients of the gift. A child is about to be born.

Angels appear in the sky, terrifying a group of shepherds who are taking care of their flocks by night. And one of the angels says to the shepherds: “Do not be afraid, for behold, 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.” To *you!* To *you!*

You didn’t create the news. You aren’t the heavenly singers who are holding and singing the message of the good news. But still this is news *for you*. This day is for you. Unto *you* is born a Savior, who is the Messiah, who is Christ the Lord. Unto *you!*

Martin Luther says that “it is not enough that we should hear [this] story if the heart be closed. I must listen,” he says, “not to a history, but to a gift. If I tell you,” Luther goes on to say, “that someone on a certain mountain peak has picked up a [hundred thousand bucks], you will say, ‘What is that to me?’ But if you are the one who has picked it up, you will be joyful. What is it to me if someone else has goods, honors, riches, and a pretty wife? That does not touch the heart. But if

you hear that this child is your, *that* takes root.” This Christ is not for someone else on some other mountain peak. This Christ child is for you:

- you whose life is drawing to an end, challenging you almost every day you live with pain and heartache
- you who find it hard to get over what life has done to you or what you have done to life
- you who struggle to claim your own worth, living with the gnawing suspicion that you don’t quite measure up
- you who have been tempted to give into despair, throw in the towel on life
- you who have it pretty well together, or at least you think you do, giving into the temptation once in a while of believing that you somehow are a lot better off than those miserable other folks
- you who simply find it difficult to manage all the details of complicated lives
- you who just want to breathe in once in a while
- you who are overwhelmed by the addictions that plague your lives and steal your freedom
- you who are saddened by grief, hounded by anger, pursued by depression

Unto *you* a child is born, a savior who is Christ the Lord. Unto *you* is born hope, forgiveness, a reason to go on, worth, freedom. Unto you is born the permission to take a breath, to relax. After all, it truly isn’t all about you.

And unto *us* a child is born, *us* a son is given:

- us who live in such a chaotic time
- us whose politics are marred by tribalism, shallowness, and mean-spiritedness
- us whose world is marked by a growing disparity between the haves and the have nots

- us for whom peace on earth seems like a distant dream as Yemini children are the latest victims of our inability to settle conflict without war
- us who are better at exploring the latest technological wonders and consumer gadgets than we are the depths of our souls
- us who are so cursed by anxiety and fear, allowing those realities to shape how we relate to others, especially the stranger
- us for whom sometimes there is just a big, deep hole of emptiness within us

Unto *us* this night is born a *Savior*. Unto us is born one who is said to save us from our sins, free us from all the silliness that typifies our lives, the destructiveness that tears us apart from one another, the injustices that characterize the way we live together. This Savior is not just going to be about what is inside our hearts. This Savior will be about saving us from how we together live and treat one another, about how we together do not live out of shalom, overall well-being and peace.

Unto *us* is born a *Messiah*. As the great Christmas carol suggests, “the hopes and dreams of all the years are met in thee tonight.” What we are truly longing for—and it’s not wireless earbuds or a smart speaker—has arrived tonight, looking a lot like ordinariness, looking like a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger. The emptiness that we try to fill with stuff and alcohol and politics and ideas and drugs and cheap relationships is being penetrated by the glory and wonder and depths God in ordinary life and relationships, filled with the goodness of God who saturates all that is, calling us away from all our false Messiahs, all our false attempts to fill the holes of our lives.

Unto *us* this night is born one who is *Lord*. In other words, unto us this night is born something new that is in charge. There is a new sheriff in town tonight. And that new sheriff isn’t the Emperor, isn’t the forces of power, domination, or control. Tonight we see that what

really runs the universe is not what runs the cultures in which we live. Tonight we discover that what runs the universe is love.

That's the message of Christmas. Unto us this night is born love. Glory to God in the highest and peace to all the world. Love is not someone else's gift—someone worthier, someone wealthier, someone prettier. No! Unto you, personally, is born this night love. Yes, it is not all about you, but it is undoubtedly, unequivocally, indisputably, undeniably for you. Trust the gift. Savor it!