Christmas Eve Sermon

Luke 2:1-14

*God is born to save us from sin and darkness.*

Over 2,000 year ago on a seemingly quiet night in a little town called Bethlehem the world was forever changed. It did not come with the loud blast of trumpets or beating of drums, but with the heavenly angels singing glory to God in the highest. It did not come with conquering armies, but with a band of impoverished and lonely shepherds who had been tending their flocks.

It did not come to a mighty, powerful, and wealthy king and queen in a palace, but to a young teenage virgin named Mary and her young newlywed husband Joseph who had nowhere to stay but a stable, and nowhere to place the infant Christ but an animal feeding bin.

This event is why we still gather together tonight and throughout the entire year. This event is why we have hope in the midst of death, joy in the midst of sorrow, and faith in the midst of uncertainty.

The event of course is the singular moment in history when God Almighty willingly came down from Heaven and was born as both God and human in the infant Jesus the Christ.

Jesus was born not to reign in a palace, be covered in gold and jewels, to lead a conquering army to war, or to bring revenge on the world. Instead he came to serve others so people would know the love of God, to be Emanuel, God with us, so no person can claim God does not understand what it is to be human, and eventually to willingly go to the cross to suffer and die to free creation from sin and the forces of evil and bring them into a new and whole relationship with God.

Yet as amazing as this good news is so often, we and our world forget it. A recent radio show I listened to on Kalamazoo 92.5 described how more and more Americans don’t like celebrating Christmas. It described how for the people polled the Christmas holiday is a time of stress, financial strain, and incredible pressures to put on “the perfect Christmas” for family.

Sadly, the show went on to say that the number one-way people coped with the Christmas holiday stress was alcohol, which incidentally was also the number one gift to be given this year according to the radio station.

It’s true that if we listen to commercials, advertisements, and the increasing pressure of our secular society to put on “the perfect Christmas” then not only will we be filled with stress and worry, but we will also miss the entire point of Christmas.

It’s not about the lights and displays, it’s about remembering THE light of the world, Jesus Christ born as both God and human to be with us, to live like us, to suffer like us, to die for us, and to rise for us all out of pure undeserved love.

It’s not about cooking the perfect ham, turkey, or prime rib, it’s is about the one who feeds us with his body and blood when we gather at the altar to receive him in bread and wine, and to hear his words “this is my body given for you” and “this is my blood shed for you.”

It’s not about competing with others to get the best Christmas gifts, it’s about how God gave us the greatest and most important gift God’s only Son Jesus our Lord who came to be born to save us from ourselves and the powers of evil.

It’s not about how much you can spend to try and create the “perfect Christmas,” it’s about remembering how Christmas is already perfect because Jesus already came into the world for our sakes, he continues to be with us, and he will come again in glory.

Over 2,000 years ago the world changed forever when God did something amazing and was born into our world for our sakes, and the world has been born anew ever since.

Our world is still filled with darkness, suffering, poverty, leaders who abuse their power and oppress the vulnerable, racism, violence, starvation, disease, and a sense of hopelessness.

Yet there is hope, joy, and life in the story of Jesus the Christ, and we the people of God, claimed and forgiven by God in our baptisms, are sent out like the shepherds before us to proclaim the amazing good news of Christmas in our words and actions with others, so that they can hear the amazing news of what God began over 2,000 years ago in a stable in a little town called Bethlehem. Merry Christmas. Amen.