

Christmas: Holy Trinity Church: December 24, 2017

Children's sermon: Luke 2: 1-20: *The Miracle of Christmas*

Preached

By

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In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Again, a warm welcome to all our guests and visitors and especially our children on this holiest of days. Girls and Boys, I want to begin with a story about a young boy named Marty. Marty was a bright and lively eight-year-old who suffered from a disability that left him deaf in one ear. He lived on a farm and in a community of farms and fences. Marty's mom, Diane, was proud of her son. She knew he had a kind and loving heart.

Several weeks before Christmas one year, Marty shared a secret with his mother. He had been doing extra chores and saving up his money to buy a Christmas present for his best friend, Kenny. Kenny was being raised by a single mom and life for their family was a daily struggle just to put food on the table and clothing on her children's backs. Marty knew that Kenny wanted a pocket compass. He also knew they were poor and could not afford such a gift. Diane knew that Kenny's mom was a very proud woman. Diane doubted that Kenny's mom would allow Kenny to accept a gift if he couldn't

give one in return. Marty argued with his mother and finally said, “But what if it was a secret? What if they never found out who gave it?” Diane finally said, “OK.”. If somehow Marty could give Kenny the gift without anyone knowing who gave it, then that would be acceptable. So, on Christmas Eve Diane watched her son walk out the door, cross the wet pasture and slip beneath the electric fence on his mission of kindness.

Marty raced up to Kenny’s door and pressed the doorbell. Then he ran down the steps and across the yard so he wouldn’t be seen. Suddenly, the electric fence loomed in front of him. He could not avoid it and ran right into the fence face first. The shock knocked him to the ground and he gasped for breath. Slowly, he got up and stumbled home.

When he arrived home Diane treated the blister on Marty’s face caused by the electric fence and then put him to bed. That night as Diane tucked Marty in, she silently complained to God for allowing her son to be hurt when he was performing a good deed. The next day, however, Kenny came to the front door excitedly talking about his new compass. Amazingly, Marty who, you’ll remember, was deaf in one ear seemed to hear Kenny talking with both of his ears. A few weeks later, the school nurse confirmed what Diane suspected: Marty’s hearing in his deaf ear had been completely restored. Though doctors

said it might have been the shock from the electric fence, Diane believed it was a Christmas miracle.

Boys and girls, Christmas Eve is a night for miracles. It is a magical night of wonder and faith. I know you are so excited. Moms and Dads are excited, too, because we remember the joy, the anticipation and the excitement we felt when we were your age as Christmas approached, and we see that same joy in your eyes.

Let's listen to the words of the prophet Isaiah who lived almost 600 years before Jesus was born, *"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned . . . For a child has been born for us, a son is given to us, authority rests upon his shoulders, and He is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."*

All of us, young and old, know what it is to walk in darkness at some time in our lives. Darkness comes in many forms like when we are sick or lonely or sad or confused. It is no accident that Christmas falls just after the shortest day of our year. Girls and boys, you know from science class, December 21st is known as the winter solstice. It is usually the shortest day of the year because the sun is shining directly on the Tropic of Capricorn, meaning that it is the

day that we receive the least amount of direct sunlight. But, at the darkest time of the year, our world turns a corner. From today on, our days will get a minute or two longer each day. There will be a little more sunlight each day. Boys and girls, Christmas reminds us that God's light has come into our cold dark world, in a physical and a spiritual way.

Boys and girls, think about the young shepherds sitting out in the dark and cold watching their sheep on that Judean hillside. They were probably about your age. They knew about darkness, cold and discomfort in a way that people like us living today do not. There were no electric lights in their world.

On that first Christmas night, the only light came from the stars above. So you can imagine how startled they were to be suddenly surrounded by a great light. Luke tells us an angel appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them. The glory of the Lord God is a wonderful thing, but when you are not expecting it, it must have seemed like an alien invasion. Luke tells us the shepherds were terrified. They had never experienced light like this.

But the angel said to them. "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly,

Luke tells us, a great company of the heavenly beings appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those of good will.”

In the darkness there is a light that shines and that light is a baby born in Bethlehem. That’s the good news for this night boys and girls. In John’s Gospel, when Jesus was all grown up he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” That light never goes out and no matter how old you get that light will always be there for you and you will never be alone because Jesus is Emmanuel which means, God is with us, which means Jesus will always be with you to give you hope and joy. It means Jesus will always be with you when you are sad or scared or alone or confused. You will never be alone. That baby lying in the manger has brought light and hope into the whole world. The baby Jesus has changed our world like no other person before him or after him has ever changed the world. Those of us who are parents know how a baby can change your world.

I once read a story about a man who was always sad. The man’s right arm and both legs were paralyzed which meant he could not move them and he could not speak. He was sad and mad because he could not talk with other

people, especially his wife. His life was filled with loneliness and darkness. One day his priest came to his house to visit with him. He found it difficult to talk with the man. As he was getting ready to leave, he remembered reading that some people who can't speak can sing, even though they cannot talk. So, he began singing, "Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright." It seemed like a miracle, but the man also began singing like nothing was wrong. He just sang: "Round yon virgin mother and child; holy infant, so tender and mild." As the man reached for the priest's hand to hold, his wife joined in the singing, "Sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace." When they all finished the man smiled, and with the light of his smile the priest knew God was there with them.

My dearest boys and girls, if that seems like a miracle, remember that Christmas is a time for miracles. The baby Jesus is the light of the world that shines in the cold darkness. The glory and the light of the Almighty Lord God of the universe is a tiny baby born in a stable filled with cows and sheep and goats and kitty cats and placed in a manger in a tiny town called Bethlehem. And tonight girls and boys, the baby Jesus is born once again in your hearts and the miracle of Christmas is this..... Jesus will come into your heart every Christmas Eve for the rest of your life just to remind you that He is with you and He loves you so very much. Amen.