

Christmas Eve

Luke 2:1-20

Christmas Eve is a very special time. A time of year when nostalgia runs deep. Barbara Brown Taylor puts it this way. She says Christmas Eve is the time, "when the membrane between heaven and earth is so thin you can almost see through it. Tonight, is the night we measure all time against."

The church's sanctuary, so beautifully decorated for the season, has become a waiting room.

We find ourselves pacing the floor nervously until we get news the baby is born. That is where we are this night.

That waiting, in itself, comes in many different forms. Truth be told, there has not been a Christmas -- not even the first one -- that went off exactly like everyone had planned.

But that does not -- that cannot -- deny the heart of the story; namely, ... that on this one night,God chose to come in human flesh. Heaven came down and glory filled our souls.

The renowned theologian, Karl Barth, was asked to be a guest lecturer at the University of Chicago Divinity School.

At the end of a captivating closing lecture, the president of the seminary announced that Dr. Barth was not well and was quite tired, and though he thought that Dr. Barth would like to be open for questions, he should not be expected to handle the strain. Then he said, "Therefore, I will ask just one question on behalf of all of us." He turned to the renowned theologian and asked, "Of all the theological insights you have ever had, which do you consider to be the greatest of them all?" It was the perfect question for a man who had written literally tens of thousands of pages of some of the most sophisticated theology ever put into print.

The students held pencils right up against their writing pads, ready to take what this great theologian would say.

Karl Barth closed his tired eyes, and he thought for a moment, and then he half smiled, opened his eyes and said to those young students:

"The greatest theological insight that I have ever had is this: "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so."

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the greatest love story ever written and the Gospel should be read always bearing that in mind.

Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so."

Folks, The Birth of Christ - Christmas is a classic love story.

And in all relationships of love, there must be that first meeting - That first encounter.
Have you ever wondered to yourself, "what if I had been born to another set of parents?"

What would my life had been like? Well, if I had, I would never have known the love of the parents that God gave me.

I would never have known the joys and frustrations of being the older brother or met my wife Margaret.

Occasionally I find myself asking those curious "what if "questions.

"What if I had gone to another school?"

What if I had moved out of Scotland?

Christmas is a crossing of paths.

Christmas is where we find the Christ of God intersecting with humanity!

Christmas is our first best meeting with the God who has desired us from the very beginning.

If not for Christmas we might never have known the intensity of the love that God has for each of us.

Mary and Joseph, far from home, a peasant mother giving birth. They laid him in the manger, and they watched his little face, and they listened for his breathing, just as every new parent does.

Christ was born into our world - One who embodied this love that God has for us.

He Loves us. Not some of the time.

Not when it is convenient, but in every moment of every single day.

It is the birth of that love into our world that we celebrate this night!

And this crossing of paths, this intersection of the divine and the human, took place in a remote, speck of a village called Bethlehem of Judea. In that time and place, One would be born into our world that became the light of the world.

This is the night when God sent out a love letter of cosmic proportions.

This is the night when Christ entered the world fully God and fully human.

We find that those gathered in his name even us here tonight fall within the embrace of that love, a love relationship that is so powerful and so deep. In scripture we read, "That neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

So many believe that true peace and true love is just over the next horizon.

Are you searching for peace? Are you searching for love?

Does it seem like life's answers are just out of reach, just over the next hill.

Well, you can find peace, true peace and love in Jesus.

He has come into our world; he has brought a Peace that the world cannot give. A peace that passes all understanding. A peace given to you by Jesus himself.

Remember our Lords words from the Bible, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

Jesus promises that if you will trust Him, He will give you, A peace that cannot be taken away, A peace that passes all understanding.

The angels declared it on that Christmas Day "Glory to God, peace on earth, good will toward men"

That baby in the manger is the light of our world, even when our world is in shambles.

For in that baby the Divine and the human cross paths.

Jesus is our living, breathing sign of the immeasurable love that God has had for all of us from the very beginning.

Christmas is the living promise that we are never ever alone.

No matter where we are in life, No matter in what condition we find ourselves, no matter how far we might stray, or how unfaithful we are, God in all his love, will continue to pursue!

It is a love that never, ever stops shining.

Amen.