

**Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> December 2022**  
**Christmas Day**  
**Glynde Lutheran Church**  
**Sermon on Luke 2:1-20**  
**Theme: “What’s Christmas all about!?”**  
**“Who or what are you focusing on?”**

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***Introduction:***

Christmas Day is one of the hardest times of the year for the preacher to preach something original and different....

Let me give it a try to begin a little differently.... I want you to imagine, with me, that you are an alien come to earth in your flying saucer.... *Oh, I don't believe in alien life, but bear with me....* Just imagine that you are an alien in human form walking around looking at the Christmas decorations in the front of people's houses and listening in to what they are talking about....

What do you think that Christmas is all about?

Well, Christmas trees and reindeer, and presents, and parties, and big fat man in a red costume.... And just maybe, possibly, you might see a baby in an animal's feedbox, and someone there might whisper to you that it is all about this baby in a manger....

Well, we are gathered here this morning to shout out aloud that Christmas is all about the birth of a baby in a manger: a special baby, *God's own Son*, who was born to utterly change our lives....

Our Advent/Christmas wreath in front of us reminds of how our whole life is changed, *or can be changed*, because the birth of Jesus, *God's Son become a human, God become an ordinary human being*. The candles remind us of the Christmas gifts that are ours because of the birth of Jesus: LOVE, PEACE, JOY, HOPE.

Christmas reminds us of how much God **loves** us. God loves us so much that He was prepared to prepared to come down among us, *in the person of the Son*, as an ordinary human being, *as a little baby born in a manger*, in order to rescue us.

I have a whole heap of “Christmas stories” that remind us of this. Because this is my last Christmas Day preaching God's message to you, I want to retell one of these. It's probably my favourite. It's the story that I call “the American Civil War” story.

It's a story about a Quaker who lived in Pennsylvania during the American Civil War:

**This Quaker family's teenaged son, Jonathan, decided to go against his family's pacifist beliefs, *and his father's wishes*, to enlist and fight in the Civil War for the Northern Army. The son left home and went off to fight in the war.**

**For a long time, the family heard nothing of the son. Then one night, the father had a dream that his son Jonathan had been wounded in action, that he was in great distress, and that he needed his father's help. So Jonathan's father left his farm and went to look for his son.**

**He went in horse-drawn buggy, and eventually he found the battlefield where his son had been fighting. He sought out the commander, who was in charge of the army, and asked him where Jonathan might be. The commander told him that there had been a heavy battle earlier in the day, and that many soldiers had been killed and that many had been wounded. He said that some of the wounded were being cared for by the medical corps, but many were still out in the trenches.**

**Jonathan's father asked if he might be allowed to go to the frontline to try and find his son. The commander gave him permission, and off the father went to try and find his son.**

**It was now night-time, and the father had to light a lantern to look for his son. The light of the lantern fell on many wounded men: some calling for help, others too seriously wounded to cry out. The task seemed impossible. How could the father find his son amongst all these wounded and dying young men? As he stumbled over body after body, the father almost despaired. He began to call out:  
"Jonathan Smythe, thy father seeketh after thee".**

**Cries could be heard here and there from the wounded lying on the battlefield, as they cried out: "I wish that were my father!"**

**The father kept up his search. At last he heard a faint, feeble voice saying:  
"Father! Over here!  
I knew that you would come looking for me!"**

**The father knelt down and took Jonathan in his arms, comforting him, and loving him. He washed and cleaned his son's wounds, bandaged them, and took his son to a place of safety, where he nursed him back to health.**

**It's a story that reminds us of what Christmas is all about: it's all about God coming down among us, *in the person of the Son*, to be born as the baby Jesus *in order to rescue us*. It's a story which reminds us how much God loves us. Christmas is all about seeing how much God loves us!!**

And how exactly did God rescue us, *through His Son being born for us as the baby Jesus*? Well, as Jesus, He lived among us as an ordinary human being, and showed us His love for us, and spoke of His love for us, and finally He suffered and died for us on a cross, *where he took on himself the judgement and the punishment that we deserve for our “sins”, our failures to love, and our refusals to love.*

As we trust in what God has done for us *through Jesus*, we have **peace** with Him, *and have peace of mind for ourselves.*

Listen again to what the angel said to the shepherds on the night of the birth of Jesus, God's Son for us:

**“Don't be afraid! I am here with good news for you, which will bring great joy to all the people. This very day in David's town your Saviour was born – Christ the Lord”** (*Luke 2:10-11*).

And then how a big choir of God's angels sang:

**“Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and peace on earth to those with whom he is  
pleased”** (*Luke 2:14*).

The baby in the manger became the man Jesus, who willingly walked the road to the cross, where he suffered and died “for our sins” (*1 Cor. 15:3*).

He took on himself the blame and the punishment that we deserve for all the wrong things that we have done and will do, so that we can have “peace” with God, *as we trust in Jesus as our Saviour....*

And as the angel said to the shepherds, this is “good news” which brings “great joy”. The message about the birth of God's Son for us as our Saviour, *Our Rescuer*, fills us with an inner **joy**, that no one and nothing can take away. We can smile, even when life seems pretty bleak, because of the lousy things that maybe are happening in our life....

And it gives us certain **hope** for the future because we know as Paul says in one of his letters:

**For I am certain that nothing can separate us from God's love: neither death nor life, neither angels nor other heavenly rulers or powers, neither the present nor the future, neither the world above nor the world below – there is nothing in all creation that will ever be able to separate us from the love of God which is ours through Christ Jesus our Lord** (*Rom. 8:38-39*).

So, where's your focus this Christmas? On “Jesus, the reason for the season”, or is it on the tinsel surrounding the birth of Jesus, *things like parties and presents, and fun and games, and relaxing....*

If you're like me, though, sometimes "the reason for the season", the birth of the baby in the manger, gets pushed to one side. If that's the case, I'd like to suggest a few things that you and your family can do in order to make Jesus and his birth for you the centre of your Christmas focus:

**\*One thing that all of us can do at the Christmas table, or afterwards as we're relaxing in the lounge or wherever, is to have someone read that Christmas story from the Bible, or from a Children's bible, like *The Beginner's Bible***

**As this is done, there can be explanations for the kids' benefit, and during it or at the end, the person reading it can explain what the birth of Jesus means to him or her, or others can be asked to talk about what the birth of Jesus means for them.**

**\*You can watch a movie about of the birth of Jesus, one like *The Nativity Story*. Or you can watch *The Story of Jesus for Children* which has children talking about the birth of Jesus and showing what happened.**

*Both of these videos are available online at the click of button.*

**\* Another thing that we can do is to sing carols *together*, as we watch together one of the Christmas specials. *Again*, as a family watches this carol singing, and joins in singing these songs, it gives an opportunity for the family to talk about the words of these songs, and to speak about what the birth of Jesus means for them.**

**\* Yet another thing that we can do is to explain to one another and to our children the connection between our Christmas customs and the birth of Jesus for us.**

**For example, we can explain how gift-giving at Christmas reminds us of God's gift to us of His Son, or how the lights on a Christmas tree remind us of the stars that God's Son left in order to come down among us, or how the various symbols and ornaments on a Christmas tree remind us of Jesus' birth, or how the tradition of Santa Claus started (see p. 14 of *The Lion Christmas Book*), and so on.**

### **Conclusion:**

Now, what more can I say than:

**"May God bless you all as the Christ-child fills the centre of your Christmas celebration, and the centre of your life all year round".**