

Dec. 25 Xmas Day Isaiah 9:6,7 Mt. 1:21

HE IS BORN

Good morning. Isn't it a wonderful day! Merry Christmas to one and all. Some of you were here last night for Christmas Eve and came again this morning to start the celebration of Christmas on the right foot. Some of you will travel later today to grammas' or other relatives to spread the Christmas cheer. So welcome this morning to Christmas Morning the day we celebrate Jesus' birth. Welcome to the joy of a new day as we celebrate God's gift to the world.

Yes, we gather this morning to celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior. For unto us a child is born! For unto us a child is given who is Christ the Lord. Joy to the world, the Lord is come, let earth receive her king. The angels sang 'Glory to the new born King.' Those are words we keep hearing these days to remind us that Jesus is truly the reason for the season. It's a time of joy when we realize the great love of God that gave us his son. So it is fitting and right that we are here this morning as a community of faith celebrating the birth of the one who had come to give us new life.

Some of you already have already unwrapped your presents or at least checked out your stocking, while others wait with excitement the joy of watching others unwrap their gifts. Carole and I will leave after worship and go to Karen's where we will unwrap gifts, then later gather at our house for a late dinner and then to their house for game night and then there will be a time to collapse and enjoy the quiet and reflect on another Christmas season gone by. No one cares about the mess of Christmas morning because there is excitement as everyone tries on new clothes, kids examine toys and games they might have received. Pictures are taken, phone calls are made and come from family and friends who could not join with others around the tree. Sometimes it goes so quickly as wrapping gets torn open without even thinking of who gave the gift. It takes longer to do the shopping, wrap the gifts, and surprise someone then to open the gifts and before you know it, under the tree is bare.

I believe Jesus shares in our joy of celebrating his birthday. He doesn't get any gifts for himself under the tree. But he does get hearts in which to live for those who believe. He doesn't mind not having candles on his cake. I mean, how big a cake would you have to have to place over 2,000 candles on it? And just think of the breath he would have to have to blow them all out with one breath to get his wish. But then again, he could whip up a giant wind storm if needed. Besides that he is the giver of wishes. No! he just enjoys the world enjoying his birthday exchanging gifts in his name. He came to give not to get. He came to save and forgive and heal. He came to give joy and peace. He came to remind us no matter the situation God is always with us for he is Emmanuel. That's part of his present to us.

Christmas morning is a great time to celebrate the birth of Jesus. It doesn't happen very often that Christmas falls on a Sunday. But it did this year. And what a great way to celebrate his birthday by coming to church and singing some hymns and joining with our church family to celebrate the great gift of God. I may have told you about one Christmas in Buffalo when some young kids brought a couple of their farm gifts they received for Christmas to worship that morning. Before worship began they showed me their new farm toys and I told them my kids always got dump trucks and fire engines and police cars. During the worship I was telling that to the congregation how our kids got those trucks and city things while Ben and Charlie Thompson got concubines. There was silence when I said that, and me, a real city boy didn't know why there was some snickering. The next thing I heard was a familiar voice from the second row right in the middle where she sat. Carole said, "It's combines, not concubines." And the whole congregation broke out in laughter.

Isaiah says, *"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given...and he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."* Matthew's Gospel states, *"She (meaning Mary) will give birth to a son and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."*

That's what we really celebrate this morning. You see by the time this day is over all the gifts under the tree will be opened, clothing will be tried on to make sure they fit, with one pile set aside to return, and another ready to be put away. New toys will be enjoyed, and I'm afraid some will be broken. There may be tears in some young kids who didn't get what they wanted, yet for less fortunate kids finding a few gifts, maybe just one, under the tree will be a blessing. In fact, some of you know we had Dominic's friend Brandon with us last night. He really doesn't have family. The tradition of our family has been to open Christmas pajamas for the kids and they get a new ornament for the tree. Karen made sure Brandon had a gift then, and also has a few under the tree to open. And here is a miracle. He has talked with his father who he hadn't seen in years and instead of eating with us tonight he is eating with his dad. Miracles do happen. Brandon has been kind of adopted by Karen's family and Carole and I will put a bow on the altar for him serving in the Marines.

Later today many parents and kids will study directions for games and kids will want to play them over and over again. The wrappings will be tossed in the wastebaskets and some time a meal will be served. All the excitement of the day will come to an end and naps will be taken as you sit and enjoy family and friends. Or some will tune in to the Bears/Packer game.

Then tomorrow we will return to the world once again. Some will be up early because it's time to exchange gifts or go look at the sales going on. Checked the newspaper this morning and saw quite a few of them. Now you can save 50% or 60% or even 70 or 80% on certain things. And the real reason for the season may well fade away, much like Santa and his sleigh that once was filled with gifts for good little boys and girls. I hope our journey to Bethlehem doesn't fade away as well. I hope the joy of Christmas doesn't just go off until next year. For we know this, or I hope we know this. Christmas really isn't gone. Christ's birth is celebrated every year. It never will be gone because Christ isn't gone. God's gift of his son is a gift that keeps on giving. He gives

peace where there is turmoil. He gives healing where there is pain. He gives forgiveness where there is sin. He gives wholeness where there is brokenness. He gives eternal life to those who believe and receive his gift of life. That's not only the message of Christmas. That's not only the message of Easter, it's the message for everyday. When we sing at Easter time "He Lives! He Lives! Salvation to impart" that hymn is a reminder of God's every day gift.

So this morning we celebrate the greatest gift ever given. Our choir has finished leading us to Bethlehem where we have gathered to listen to the story of the birth of Jesus. I do hope we have found new joy in reliving the story. I know some have felt God speaking to them and hopefully others have as well. The Christmas story is always a life changing story so that we can live a life full of joy. God has blessed many in different ways.

But like any birth, it's only the beginning. This is a starting block. It's taking the first step. The journey is just beginning for some, and for others they are getting ready to renew their journey. Christ's message lives on. The world is full of hope because Christ lives today. "Because he lives" we sing from time to time, "We can face tomorrow. Because he lives all fear is gone. Because I know he holds the future and life is worth the living just because he lives." Those hymns and their message never get old for me for they remind me that God continues to work in our lives and invites us always to be on the journey of faith. "Fear not!" the angels said, "For God is with you."

So today, enjoy the day. Celebrate with your family. Enjoy those days off from work, or from school. Enjoy gathering with family and friends. Enjoy getting ready to start a fresh new year beginning next Saturday night at midnight when the old is gone and the new begins. But always remember this...remember the joy of Christmas. When you begin to take the ornaments from the tree and put them away, don't put Jesus away with them. Don't place him in some dark place until next year. Keep him in your hearts. Keep the joy of Christmas every day. For Christmas is celebrating the gift of God's son.

What a simple message for us this Christmas morning. Isaiah spoke of the one that was to come who would be our Wonderful Councilor, Mighty God Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace. Matthew said that the Savior was born.

Think about those things this morning knowing that the child that was born over 2,000 years ago came to bring us eternal hope. So may it be not only today, but for every day.

Merry Christmas to one and all. Enjoy celebrating Jesus' birthday. Enjoy the gifts under tree. But most of all enjoy the gift God gave to us....his Son, Savior, God with us.

See you next year..... that is next Sunday same time....Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.