

"Somebody is Coming to Town"

Luke 2:11

December 2002

School Christmas Program Homily

Good Shepherd Lutheran School

Boise, Idaho

Pastor Tim Pauls

For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

You better watch out. You better not cry. You better not pout. I'm telling you why: Somebody is coming to town.

He's making a list, and checking it twice. He's going to find out who's naughty and nice. Somebody is coming to town.

He sees you when you're sleeping. He knows when you're awake. He knows if you've been bad or good; so be good for goodness' sake.

Yes, you better watch out. You better not cry. You better not pout. I'm telling you why: Somebody is coming to town.

And we're not going to talk about him tonight, because Someone better has come to town: Namely, He's come to the little town of Bethlehem.

Consider for a moment the words to the Christmas tune I just recited. Is this a nice guy-one to put your trust in? He's an all-knowing sort of individual who knows you while you sleep and while you're awake. He makes a careful list of who's been naughty and nice, and that's what his favor is based on. "Nice" means presents. "Naughty" means coal, and there's no middle ground; you're one or the other. Not only that, he's a touchy sort of judged: If you just cry or pout, it's enough to knock you out of the "nice" category. No talk about mercy or pardon or forgiveness in that song: Be good for goodness' sake - or suffer the consequences.

You better watch out. You better not cry. You better not pout. And, you better face facts: You do cry, and you do pout. In fact, there's nothing quite like the hectic holiday season to bring out the crying, pouting, impatience and annoying characteristics in all of us. The season of peace becomes the festival of stress. If Christmas is all about one who grades you on your good behavior - well, let's just say that we'll all be able to keep our coal-fired appliances running well into the new year.

So we're here tonight to hear of a better One who comes. The angel announces His coming to the shepherds like this: "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger" (Lk. 2:10-12).

Note what the angel doesn't say: He doesn't say, "Unto you is born one who will examine your lives

and see if you're nice enough for God to like you." He doesn't say, "Unto you is born another judge to point out your faults." He doesn't even say, "Unto you is born a good role model; and if you follow His example, then you'll be nice, not naughty."

He says, "There is born to you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

You see, you don't need another judge or another role model in the manger. Centuries before, God gave the Ten Commandments to tell us right and wrong, what we should do and what we should not do; and for all those centuries, man proved beyond a doubt that he couldn't keep the Ten Commandments. You and I are cut from the same cloth-made out of the same sinful flesh; we don't-we can't-obey God as we ought; and one more role model isn't going to make us any better.

We don't need a role model in Bethlehem. We need a Savior; and that's who is born in Bethlehem.

Now, be careful: A Savior who forgives sins is not the same as a corrupt judge who dismisses sins. That Baby in the manger takes sin very seriously. He doesn't declare, "Since I'm born, you can do whatever you please, because sin doesn't matter anymore." He's born in Bethlehem with a specific destination in mind-nails and spear will pierce Him through, the cross be borne for me, for you. He's the Son of God become human flesh, and He's going to take His Father's beating for your sins. He is often falsely accused of being an unmerciful judge who comes to condemn you, but nothing could be further from the truth. He comes to save you from condemnation, to intervene and redeem you before the Judgment comes. True, the Bible declares that He will sit on the throne as the Judge on the Last Day; but this Judge has already sentenced Himself to death in your place, paid that price, and risen again to deliver you. There is no other judge more merciful than that. That is why we rejoice to confess our sins and trust in His forgiveness, for He has redeemed us from our sin. And that is why it makes no sense to deny Him and His forgiveness-for why would anyone suffer such severe punishment when the sentence has already been carried out?

That's the One we sing about tonight. What follows is far more a worship service than a children's program. By Scripture readings and songs, the children proclaim to you the Word of God, the One who comes to the town of Bethlehem. The jolly man in the red suit looks friendly enough, but don't be fooled; he's all about judging you based on your behavior, and there's not a lick of forgiveness in those twinkling eyes. Ah, but the One in the manger-the Son of God made flesh, He looks at you for exactly who you are and declares to you the greatest gift of all: "Heaven is yours, because I forgive you."

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen