

"This Babe's for You!"

Luke 2:10-12

21 December Anno Domini 2003

Children's Christmas Service

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church of Emmett, Idaho

Pastor Michael L. McCoy

Grace, mercy and peace to you in the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear Baptized,

One day Jesus asked the gathered people a question about John the Baptizer. Three times Jesus asked about the man named John who was in prison, *"What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? ... But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet"* (Luke 7:24-26).

Another day a messenger asked the gathered people a question about these children. Three times he asked about the children who were up front in the sanctuary, *"What did you come here to see? Nervous children singing for your entertainment? But what did you come here to see? A bunch of kids dressed in itchy costumes for your amusement? But what did you come here to see? A story? Yes, I say to you, and more than a story.*

For behold, this is the true account of what God has done for you so that you may have a now of peace and an eternity of joy. Please listen to three verses from Luke, chapter two and hear with your ears and know in your soul that ...

... This Babe's for You!

Then the angel said to them, "Fear not! For behold, I bring you Good News of a 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 and lying in a manger."

Thus far the Word of the LORD our God.

Christmas is the celebration of the Savior coming into the world. This is not the one who comes to find out if you've been naughty or nice. No indeed, for the LORD God Almighty already knows that there is no one who is nice and that every one is worse than naughty. But remember, He came not to condemn the world, but to save the world and every one in it and every one in this room. Thus His advent is to set His people free and thus the Word made flesh comes as a baby ... as God in diapers ... snoozing in a manger and even then the silent Word is pleading for us.

Now God is awe-full and perfect and hating sin. His holiness and almightiness frighten us and make us want to hide from Him as Adam and Eve did in the Garden of Eden and as people often do today.

A transgressor in the Presence of the LORD God Almighty is quite uncomfortable. But dear children of all ages, look at the Babe in Bethlehem. There is God. Are you afraid of a baby? No, not at all. We all love babies, especially the Baby Jesus. No one is offended at this Jesus. We can handle a baby; and if this Babe in Mary's arms is God ... well, we can handle God, right?

But there's the problem and it's a problem for all here today ... from those who are Christmas-only Church-attenders to those who are Lutherans ... that is, those who are here every Sunday possible. We all like the Jesus of the Christmas story because we think that this is a fine story and it's truly good and worthwhile to listen to it once a year when the children present the Christmas Story. But too often we want to keep Jesus at arm's length ... to do what we do right here ... store the wooden manger with the doll in it downstairs in the Church basement for 364 days a year ... or like an ornament that is taken from the box and hung on the tree . . . hung on a tree . . . hmmm.

This becomes the major issue with many people. They don't mind the symbolism of the Jesus doll in the manger on the floor, but many become agitated at the Jesus on the cross ... at the crucifix on the altar. Why? Because Christ born is much more acceptable than Christ crucified. Please do not be offended at the Good News ... at the Gospel, for the apostolic declaration for the pastor is to be determined to proclaim nothing among you except Christ crucified for the sins of the world. Behold, the Jesus of Bethlehem is the same Jesus of Golgotha. We may not separate the two, for there are not two Jesuses. Rather, it's the same Body and Blood at both places – Jesus in Bethlehem's manger – Jesus on Golgotha's cross. Jesus was born in order to die ... to shed His Blood to pay for the sins of the world ... to give His Body unto death ... to suffer hell in order to open heaven ... to die in order to give life.

Even all of this is not enough however. For Jesus could have died a thousand times and you could have heard that truth a thousand times; and still it would not be of any benefit to you. Jesus died. 'Tis true. But it would not be of benefit until you heard that Jesus was crucified and died ... for you. That Jesus rose again from the dead for you. That He gave His Life for you. for you!

In fact, Jesus could have been born a thousand times and you could hear this truth year after year; and still it would not be of any benefit to you. Jesus is born. 'Tis true. But it would not be of benefit until you heard that Jesus was born ... for you. ... for you! God did all this for you. This Babe's for you.

So also, you could show up on seventy Sundays in as many years to see the children in costume and to hear the Christmas Story, but it not be of any benefit until you realized that this is the true story of the Birth of the Savior for you. Or, as the shepherds heard from the Christmas angel ...

*"Fear not! For behold, I bring **you** Good News of a 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 and lying in a manger."*

In other words, ... "This Babe's for You!"

So, What did you come here to see? Nervous children singing for your entertainment? But what did you come here to see? A bunch of kids dressed in itchy costumes for your amusement? But what did you come here to see? A story? Yes, I say to you, and hear more than a story ... to hear that Jesus was born for you, lived for you, died for you, rose again for you, and ascended into heaven for you

... to hear that you are forgiven of all yours sins in the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, I invite and encourage you to come the Christmas Eve candlelight service at 7:30 pm this Wednesday evening and the Christmas morning service at 10 am. ... and, the Lord willing, next Sunday when we will hear about some other babies from Bethlehem. Amen.