



Luke 2:1-20
Christmas Eve 2019

A blessed Christmas to you! We gather in families and even as a larger family here tonite. This is a time to take a moment and realize the people and love that reaches into your life. For many of us there will laughter, story-telling, and a lot of food. For others tonite is a sad silent night. Here we hold up Jesus as the centrepiece. The Christmas story says, “**A Savior has been born for you...a Savior has been born...for you.**”

It all happened long ago in...

BETHLEHEM

I remember visiting Bethlehem many years ago. Across from the Church of All Nations is a Police station. Armed officers walked the roof watching crowds. The Church is huge; a boardwalk took us over ancient mosaic flooring. As we approached the altar, we were directed to a little doorway and down an old marble stairway from Emperor Constantine's time leading to a lower level.

We entered a grotto - a big cave-like area, that could have been a stable open to the fields 2000 years ago. Two busloads of tourists were already there. Inlaid on the floor was a large silver star. A sign said, “The star marks the place where Jesus Christ was born.” People lined up, some walking on their knees with tears in their eyes so they could kiss the star. As we stood together in that cramped space, a voice began singing, “O Come, All Ye Faithful.” Other voices joined in and filled the room.

How does one little baby have such an impact?

We have been telling the story for millennia. Christmas shows the turmoil of a young man and teenage mom. They struggled with what was happening and their families had concerns. The plan of traveling all the way to Bethlehem for Mary who was so pregnant – would have caused a stir. But they went – somehow trusting that God would take care of them. Hidden in flesh, Jesus was there.

There are similarities to our story. Every family has trouble at one time or another. Unexpected things happen that break our hearts.. and we have to move on.

There are parallels in today's world as well. People still don't have time or space for others because they are the wrong culture, religion, gender or age. Soldiers and Police still try to keep the peace. And we try hard to carry on in a world full of divisions

A SAVIOR

The Christmas story reaches to us. **A Savior has been born for you!** Far beyond anything else, that is the message. If you only come to church on Christmas or Easter; **a Savior has been born for you!** There is no political filter, God's concern is not that you are Liberal, Conservative, NDP or Green Party. The announcement abides whether you are Lutheran or Catholic, thin or heavy, incarcerated, addicted, unemployed, wealthy, poor, gay, straight, divorced, single, married, widowed, Canadian, American, Middle-Eastern, successful, ill-tempered, illiterate, or illegitimate.... **A Savior has been born for you!**

A Savior is born... one who can help you get up again, especially if you have lost, failed, been guilty... or if you have felt broken, hurt or shamed.. all those times when it is hard to get up.

A Savior is born ... that means understanding gentleness, sensitivity, caring.

A Savior is born... like us with eyes wide open to the world.

A person I know with a lot of struggles said to a dear friend, "I am glad you are here, you are a soft place for me to fall."

God becomes a baby. This helper is gentle. .. a soft place to fall.

BORN

Christmas shows us people looking for hope like the wise men; and others surprised by the message like the shepherds. So whether we are looking for something good to believe in, or are surprised by the call to faith that God is still present in this struggling world – the message announces that God has joined us. It tells us that there is a continuance of life and God's love. The world we know is new again, because God joins us in life.

At birth, our children are so small, so sensitive, so loved and wonderful. The presence of children turns everything else around. We see things differently. We are better because of them. We have cared for children, and now the message is that a child cares for us...

God looked through the eyes of a baby and saw us. That is the "good news of a great joy" God knows us, God loves us, God has sent a gift into human history – a Savior.

There is a soft place to fall. There is help to get up. **Jesus, the Savior has been born for you.**

Love is here now, and the message of God with us is that we are free to overcome hate with love and darkness with light... now... today. Christ is with us at home, at work and

in the coming year. The Christmas story is **for us**. A crowded stable leads to a lonely cross and an empty tomb. Join us on the journey, won't you? No need to travel alone.

Merry Christmas.

Amen.