

Sermon- Our Saviors Lutheran Church- Christmas Eve- 12/24/2018

A Little or a lot of Love

Grace and Peace to you and from our Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, Grace and Peace to you especially on this night of Our Savior's birth. I, along with Kasey, Marcie, Ruthie, Colleen, Jennifer, Chris, Dave, Berdie, Ardy, and Luann extend to you and your loved ones a joyous and blest Christmas night. I hope your time together is filled with laughter and love. I hope your meals will be laced with lively conversation and prayers of thankfulness. May the empty chairs at your Christmas table remind you of loved ones who are absent this year, and bring you warm memories of Christmases past, and, may you feel the peace of Christ in your loss.

And may the gifts you give and receive fit perfectly, be the right color, make the proper sounds, be easily assembled after the kids go to bed, and come with batteries.

It is always difficult for a preacher man or woman to come up with a new homily for Christmas. After all you have heard a ton of them, and, you all know the story. Simply put, Christ was born. Because I should say something more than 'Christ is born,' here is my exercise in a homily to make some sense about what it means for us.

Last Thursday on ABC, an annual TV special aired titled, "A Charlie Brown Christmas." A favorite of mine. It first aired in 1965. It is always popular because Charlie Brown's experiences mirror our own. Of course, for the Peanuts crew it is Christmas time. Charlie is in his usually depressed state. He for some reason feels sad when he believes he should be happy. He cannot understand why he can't get in the holiday spirit. Lucy, being the take charge person is directing the Christmas pageant. The cast of the pageant doesn't get the true spirit of the holiday pageant so Lucy sends Charlie out to get a Christmas tree. And as Lucy suggests, "Charlie, get the biggest, shiniest, pinkest tree in the lot." (Remember, this is the 1960s, the fad was brightly colored aluminum trees.) But, Charlie picks a tree that speaks to him, a real tree, but, a wimpy tree, a weak tree, one that no one else had chosen.

Reminds me of some of the trees that my Dad and I chose on Christmas Eve. That's when we got our tree. Cheaper and we celebrated the 12 days of Christmas

not the months before. But back to the story. Charlie has chosen a tree that is not beautiful at all. He is laughed at, made fun of, and basically called names. Charlie sighs and wonders, “isn’t there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about?” Just then, Linus walks onto the stage and says:

“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; you shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

You could have heard a pin drop among the cast of the pageant. Meanwhile, Charlie takes his chosen tree home - the pageant people didn’t think it was pretty enough. He looks at his tree, and, shares a word of grace. “I never thought that it was such a bad little tree. It’s not bad at all, really. Maybe it just needs a little bit of love.”

That is the Gospel message for today. It’s a message to the Charlie Browns of the world, to us. It’s a message that Jesus Christ was born as a way of bringing good news to those who have been beaten down by self-doubt, anxiety, and despair. It’s a message to those who see in the mirror every day all the ways they’ve fallen short, for not being pretty enough, rich enough, tall enough, or strong enough. It is a message that seeks to reach those who feel forgotten and abandoned by the world. Like the shepherds. You think it’s a coincidence that they received the first announcement about the birth? Yes Shepherds, not fat cats, not hedge fund managers, not Pastors, not Bishops, not ELCA Lutherans, but Shepherds, illiterate, often drunk, mostly smelly non religious vagabonds. Not us, they said. We are only shepherds. We aren’t fancy, religious people. We’ve never worshipped in the temple, or been confirmed. Yes you, the angel said.

Kind of funny - we are the 2018 version of the shepherd. Not the smelly, drunk, illiterate kind but shepherds of a different type. In many ways we are not the powerful. We live in a world of broken relationships, of personal struggles, of

shattered dreams. Many of us question whether or not God would come to us as a Savior. Many of us feel we don't deserve it. We haven't been religious enough, never went to Confirmation, drink too much, get angry too often, forgive reluctantly, and fall short in our relationships. Well he did come for you.

If Jesus was born for those gruff and grubby shepherds, then he was also born for you. If Jesus was born for Peter, James and John, uneducated and uncouth fisherman, then he also was born for you. If Jesus was born for Mary Magdalene, the harlot, Matthew the tax- collector, Joseph of Arimathea, the proud religious Jew, Bartimaeus, the blind beggar, then the Savior was born for you.

Not that his name is Jesus because he will save people from their sins, but his name is Jesus because he will save YOU from your sins.

Yes we are the Shepherds, the Charlie Brown tree. Maybe we just need a little bit of love. Actually we have received not a little bit of love but a whole lot of love.

Jesus was born for YOU.

Merry Christmas

Amen.

