Imagine yourself at the Nativity scene on the first Christmas in Bethlehem. What do you see? What do you hear? What do you smell? Besides Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus, who else were there? Maybe the angels, the shepherds, the animals, and perhaps the three Wise Men, although the Wise Men’s presence at the manger was debatable...some argue that they didn’t even arrive until a few years after Jesus was already born….but let’s just keep everyone happy and we’ll include the Wise Men at the Nativity scene as well. ☺

 So you got this visual in your head now? Let’s zoom in a little more….What else was happening? Did Mary and Joseph look happy, worried, confused, stressed and anxious? Perhaps they were tired or full of joy? What was the condition of the barn like? Was it dark, cold, or smelly?

 Often times we have this protocol or the romanticized “perfect” image of the Nativity scene engrained into our heads. However, if we look more closely, the surrounding and the circumstances were not so “perfect” after all. **But what made the night perfect was that the “Perfect Child” was born, in the midst of an imperfect world.** That’s what’s most important and not all the peripherals, but yet they all play a role within the larger story that has been told and read year after year…that story never gets old.

 Although some of these finer details are important, they are not overly critical. Does it matter whether Jesus’s actual birthday was not on 12/25? No, it doesn’t. But no matter what, we still celebrate Jesus’s birth to humanity, as a fulfillment of God’s promise, on this day. **Let’s not get hung up on the technical details of where, when or how Christ was born to us….what does matter, though, was that Christ WAS born and WHY He was brought to us to this earth as a gift from God to humanity! It was God who brought the ultimate gift to us, not Santa!**

 How many of you have acted in the Christmas Pageant before when you were a kid? Chances are if you haven’t been in one, you’ve probably seen one at some point. I remember when I was in Pre-K and Kindergarten we had to perform that Nativity every year at our annual Christmas show. In my first year, I was like most people a sheep. Then the following year, I got a promotion, I became a shepherd. Then on my last year, I became one of the wise men. I was kind of bummed out that I never got a chance to be the angel or Joseph.

 **Every kid in the class had a role to play and they were all important to be there. Just as every character had a specific purpose in the Christmas story.** Mary/Joseph and Jesus had to be there, for obvious reason. The angels (or the messengers) had to announce the good news to the shepherds AFTER Jesus was born, and the shepherds were the first people to arrive who became eyewitnesses to the Messiah’s birth. It was the shepherds who were the 1st ones to go and to tell other people about it. They were the first evangelists, the bearers of the good news that a Savior has been born to us. The wise men eventually brought gifts that represent who this Christ-child was….as the royal King, the high Priest and the Sacrifice.

 If you were there at the Nativity scene right now, what role would you have played there? What gifts would you have brought for the newborn baby Jesus, if any? So what brought you there at the Nativity scene? Who invited you? Which star did you follow to get there?

 Well, come to think of it, none of us here tonight were there at the Nativity scene on the first Christmas, but yet **we still believe! Why?** **We believe in the miracle that took place more than 2,000 years ago, as well as the miracles that are still happening in our lives and all around us today.** Yes, we believe! **What took place at the manger served as a pivotal point in the course of human history, as well as of our faith. This Promise of the Messiah as prophesied throughout the Old Testament was now being fulfilled. The waiting was finally over, and the Messiah had come!**

What happened at the Nativity scene was **a Human meets the Divine encounter -** an Ah-Ha moment….all of a sudden everything that seemed so radically confusing was now making sense. Things were falling into place and it was all happening right before our eyes. **This God-child Jesus, reflecting the perfect image of God, was brought into this imperfect world in order to save us, to redeem us and to give us a new hope and a purpose.** He was God’s greatest gift for humanity.

 Christ came to reclaim our faith and our lives that have often gone astray. Not only that, Christ came to light the path of truth in a world full of darkness. Suddenly everything became transparent and clear. The light shined brightly over the land of darkness. However, we must not stare at the light for too long, nor must we stay at the manger too long admiring the scene. That was not where God wanted us to be.

 The shepherds and the wise men got the same message from the angel as well, after witnessing the birth of Christ at the manger. They returned to where they came from but took a different route. **They were being sent out to proclaim to others about what they had seen, what they had heard, and experienced on that very first night of Christmas.**

 **In the same way today, we too are being challenged to go out and to share what we’ve seen, heard, and experienced here this evening.** We are all witnesses and proclaimers of Christ’s coming both then and now. We are all being commissioned to go and tell others about what Christ has done in our lives.

 Chances are, we have heard this Nativity story too many times since childhood. We might have had our own precept of what should or shouldn’t belong there. However, there are many others out there who have NEVER heard of or could care less about this story – the story of a Savior who was born to them on this night in Bethlehem – the city of David. *"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. 17 "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.[[1]](#footnote-1)* This is why Jesus came, this is why He was brought to us here on this night! **What has brought YOU here?**

 I do not know what brought you here tonight….whether you are here almost every Sunday for the past 30-40 years or whenever your work schedule permits, or you’re just in town visiting your relatives or just something or someone prompted you to be here on this night, **God has brought you here and you are most welcomed in God’s house!** The Spirit has led you and directed your steps here where Christ is the host and we are all His guests.

 **However, on this special and Holy Night, we shall reverse the role. We shall be the hosts in welcoming Christ as our guest…into this world and into our hearts.**

 As a gathered community of faith, we are commissioned to be sent out and not congregated here for too long, staring or admiring the beauty of the scenery. But instead we shall proclaim what we’ve seen and heard on this night **without fear** and **trepidation**, as the angels declared to the shepherds, ***“Do NOT be afraid; for I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah,the Lord****.[[2]](#footnote-2)*

 So it doesn’t matter what brings you here tonight. You might not have brought any gifts with you tonight, but that’s OK. God has already supply us with the greatest gift of all through Jesus the Christ. It is by no coincidence that God has brought you here. What’s more important though is, what are you bringing back to your neck of the wood? What different path will you take as you go from here? Like the shepherds and the wise men, don’t go back the same way that you came!

 **What stories and messages will you proclaim in Christ, through Christ, and of Christ?** **For Christ has born, Christ is here among us now, Christ will come again.** Hellelujah, Amen.

1. *John 3:16-17* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Luke 2:10-11* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)