

## **“Telling the Jesus-Story”**

**Luke 2:1-20, Isaiah 9:2, 6-7**

**December 18, 2011 --- Fourth Sunday of Advent**

On this glorious 4th Sunday of Advent, the last Sunday before celebrating Christmas—the story of Jesus’ birth is foremost on our minds, and in our hearts. We picture it. We sing about it. It is center-stage—in our memories and feelings, and in the deep meaning of that birth, on that night. And while that night is not the whole story of our Christian faith, it is indispensable in so many ways. Today there are three qualities I would like to mention...about Telling the Jesus-Story:

First of all, it clearly is a *Bible story*, so let me speak about Bible stories, as a whole:

I believe that Biblical stories and themes, the foundations of our faith as Christians—need to be told more now...maybe, than ever. For children, absolutely. But also for all ages of folks. For we in today’s world seem to be becoming less knowledgeable and familiar, less informed, and less articulate about the Bible than at any time we can remember, and maybe in generations.

A few very basic stories...and themes needing to be known are: 1—from the Old Testament: stories of creation, the Ten Commandments, the reign of King David, the Divided Kingdom following his reign, the people of Israel in exile, their return; and 2—from the New Testament: the birth of Jesus, the life and teachings of Jesus, of course the death and resurrection of Jesus, the spread of the New Testament church in Acts, the many letters of Paul the Apostle and others, and the Revelation to John—all are part of the bare minimum that we Christians should know of our faith.

Now...don’t worry, I don’t have an “exam” or “quiz” for us today (after all, it’s Christmas!) But just imagine, what would be the gaps in our knowledge and understanding if we all tried one.

Telling the Jesus-Story, in its place in the whole Bible story, is more vital and important now than ever!

Second, we all—who believe in and follow Jesus, we who have been graced by life-in-faith, life abundant, and anticipating and assured of eternal life,... we who have had our lives changed: we each know the Jesus-Story, personally! *We must pass this discovery of God's love along to a world in desperate need.* A world of people needing acceptance, needing forgiveness, needing love and joy and peace.

It is Incumbent upon us to pass on the Jesus-Story...to today's world and generations. After all, this all has been an incredible *gift* given to us. It is a *gift* given not for us to hoard and keep private and hidden away. Rather...it *is* for us to spread to others and share with others, and with the world around us...in whatever ways each of us are best gifted by God to share such incredibly good news. Maybe through: our words, our example and our deeds, our attitudes, our acceptance of others, our serving others, our generosity to others, through our Love for others. So, telling the Jesus-Story in our own particular ways, or combination of ways is more vital and important now than ever!

Finally, we all need to remember with the deepest gratitude the Jesus-Story, and how it became the *real* story of God's love for us and gift of faith given to us...and the way Christmas became real for us, personally.

A- That means remembering our own first Christmases. Not many of us may be able to remember the actual true first Christmas. For our grand-daughter Maya, 2½ now (who I will see next week, and who just can't wait to see her Grandpa (or maybe it's the other way around))—this will be her 3<sup>rd</sup> Christmas. Maybe she will start remembering them from about now forward.

But we all recall some early first-sensations, if not from memory, from stories told to us, maybe from photos, or even videos. But especially, when do we recall first making the *connection* of the sparkle of the Christmas celebration with the *birth of Jesus*, Jesus the Savior?

B- That also means remembering our first Christmas as a committed Christian: when was it that you celebrated your first Christmas after Christ came into your life, and you seriously and meaningfully understood Salvation in Christ, and then connected the Christmas-Birth of Jesus, to the Easter Resurrection, and then to the Eternal Life that is now yours personally? Christmas took on a different and a hugely amplified meaning then.

C- That also means remembering your most *current Christmas*: this week, coming up, in the very specific and very real life you are living today. And then, living *on* into the foreseeable future of the New Year. Nothing—is more real-life, more current, maybe more sobering, or maybe more ecstatically joyful than connecting the birth of Jesus with our most immediate and current Christmas! Right now! In the week before us! And, with the very current needs of 2011, and soon 2012, in your life, and in our world. Needs that need the in breaking of the living Jesus Christ. How very crucial and very urgent this Christmas is.

So, remembering and knowing, understanding, and then telling the Jesus-Story is more vital and important now than ever!

What *help*—beyond any power we could conjure up, yet empowering our spirits! What *joy*—beyond our control! What *glory*—beyond our imagining! What love—that simply overwhelms us! What Good News—that we simply cannot help ourselves from sharing!

Christ is coming...*to be born into our world!*

Christ is coming...*to be born into our very lives*, in exactly the way He knows that we need him most!

That—is the Jesus Story...being told Christmas after Christmas, year-after-year, life-after-life—and told from person-to-person-to person. Thanks be to God for the glorious good news of the Gospel! Amen.