

“Here We Are.”

Luke 2:1-20

Here we are on a Christmas Eve, much like the many Christmas Eve's that have come in the past and will come in the future. Tonight, we celebrate the birth of the Savior of Mankind, Jesus Christ. It was on this night over two thousand years ago that Christ was born to bring us a new life and life eternal so that we would never have to experience death and live eternally with God.

The birth story of Jesus from Luke is a timeless story, that Christians all over the world turn to in this season to stir in themselves hope for life and hope for a new day in life, and soon a new year. In the Christian church Christmas Eve concludes the season of Advent, or the season of preparation for the coming Christ. We have spent the season exploring what it means to prepare our hearts and our spirits for Christ so that we can better appreciate the coming of Christ into the world.

On this night years ago, I believe there was a moment living in the moment, of taking grasp of what was truly before Joseph and Mary and ultimately before all of humankind. Sometimes in the midst of our lives especially in the Christmas season we are constantly pushing forward rather

taking a moment to appreciate what is happening in the here and now. I know that I fall to this, for I am always pushing forward to the next service, next Christmas party, or the next store to find gifts for my loved ones.

Unfortunately, I rarely take time to experience the moment, the moment at which we can look at each other and say “Here we are” and truly appreciate the joy, love, and happiness that can come from living in the moment.

I believe though, that the Gospel writer gives us a moment in time when the participants in the story took a moment and experienced life in the present. In our scripture reading from Luke we have the narrative of Joseph and Mary going to Bethlehem for the census as decreed by the Roman Emperor. They were being forced to go to a place far away because of hard economic times, because the Roman Empire was needing more revenue, so they decided to do a census and tax all of those that they counted. Life in the Roman Empire would have been very difficult for people of status of Joseph and Mary, for they were at the bottom of society, but they were expected to make life for those at the top easy through their work. They had been pushing to get to Bethlehem for this reason, a reason that they had very little control over.

Mary being extremely pregnant, was getting close to her birth. She would have been in labor as she approached the city, and by the time they had an opportunity to get to a place, there was no room for them in an inn or in a guestroom. They were forced to go to a stable to give birth, a place with animals. They were being forced to move forwards towards a birth in a place where a birth should not occur, and they had the anxiety of bringing a new life into the world.

Yet finally, Christ was born. Christ was born, wrapped up snugly, and then placed in a manger to rest. Here is the moment that Joseph and Mary were searching for. It was time for them to live in the moment of the birth of their son, and the birth of the Son of God, the soon to be redeemer of all of humanity. The time was now. They were at the place they were suppose to be.

The time was now for the shepherds in the field. The angels visisted the lowest of all society to inform them that the King of Kings had just been born and it was time for them to witness the miracle that had just taken place.

They were called from their pastures to go into town and be a part of something greater than themselves. By God revealing the lowliest of society to the birth of the Son of Man, God declared that Christ came for all people.

The most humble Christ came for, and for us today, Christ came for us. The time for the shepherds to be in their place was now.

For us today, a little over two thousand years later, the story of Christ still rings true. We have been preparing in our various ways for the holiday, with preparations of our homes, gifts, food, or anything else. We have been preparing. But now is the time for us to be ready spiritually. I believe that all of the elements of Christmas are not worth much if we do not prepare ourselves spiritually. Christmas is a religious holiday and rightfully so. It is crucial that we take time for the spiritual part of the holiday if we are to truly embrace Christmas.

The time for us to be in the moment is now. Here we are at Christmas eve and it is time for us to be in the moment and witness the miracle that is occurring. The time is now for us to live in the present and let Christ into our hearts and into to our lives.

Jesus Christ came into the world so that we might have life, and have life abundantly and live eternally. Jesus Christ came into the world so that those at the bottom of society and even at the top of society might have a new opportunity to live life. We heard readings this evening of the people that

Christ came into the world for, and that includes you and me as well. Jesus Christ came into the world to change the world, and to change hearts, including your own heart.

Jesus Christ in his life did many great things, but the greatest of all of things is the saving work done on the cross for us. While we celebrate the beginning of Christ's life tonight, it all points towards the resurrection, of when Christ defeated death so that we defeat death by believing in him. The time is now for us to live in the moment and let the resurrection shine through us on this night, so that we can truly experience what it means to have Christ in our hearts on this joyous night.

Christ came into the world for this night, and for all nights. Now is the time to allow the transforming power of Jesus Christ to take hold, and to allow Jesus Christ to radically change your life. Take time this holiday and remember what can come from a life in Christ, which are the promise of a new beginning and life eternal, now and forever. Tonight is the night, and here we are, at the beginning of it all. Amen.