

Christmas and After

Sermon December 26, 2021 - First Sunday after Christmas

Golden verse: *“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake Jesus Christ became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich” 2 Corinthians 8: 9.*

Dear beloved, as I was preparing this sermon, two messages became very significant for me, which I would like to share with you today.

First: During this Christmas time, we see again clearly what the meaning of LOVE is and what LOVE can do. We have a great opportunity to see much clearly what God did on the first Christmas night, and what WE should do today, having God’s Christmas gift, Jesus Christ, in our hearts.

As I walked through the shopping malls, I could more clearly see who has much and who has little.

Secondly: If we place the Christmas stories in a puzzle, we can see that God revealed the arrival of Jesus to the shepherds and to the wise men, to the lowliest of people and the wealthiest. Both groups were invited to come and see Jesus.

Reading the Gospel from Luke, we see the shepherds who were taking care of their flocks at night. The angel of the Lord came to them and told them that the Saviour was born that day in Bethlehem. The angel says, *“Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; He is the Messiah, the Lord.”* The angel proclaimed that Jesus is a great joy for ALL people. We can assume that these poor shepherds did not think highly of themselves. They were outcasts from the church, from the public areas, since they lived outside in the field and they were not able to follow the religious rituals regularly. For this, they were marginalized by their society. And yet, THEY were receiving the greatest message of their lives that the long-awaited Messiah had come.

Why? For two reasons. Because God wanted to show that He came down to be with the poorest and with outcasts, being one with the lowest as a humble human being. Secondly, because these shepherds were watching those newborn sheep which one day were to be sacrificed on the altar, so their blood would wash away the humans’ sin.

When we think about the magnitude of the mission of Jesus, we are astonished, and we cannot do anything else but humble ourselves. We go on our knees adoring Him, as the shepherds did on Christmas night surrounding the manger. From His righteousness, Christ came down to share with us His everlasting life. He took us out of our sinful state and crowned us with His salvation. Jesus made the poorest the richest. And this is what Jesus does for us today. Just as we read in the Bible, the little child David was a shepherd and this little shepherd became a powerful King of Israel. Because of God's gift, today we go from shepherds to royalty by accepting Jesus. God gave us, through Christ, the crown of righteousness. This is the great mystery of humanity.

“God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God” 2 Corinthians 5:21.

“In that day the LORD Almighty will be a glorious crown, a beautiful wreath for the remnant of His people” Isaiah 28:5.

“In the future, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me but also to all who have loved His appearing” 2 Timothy 4:8.

“Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him” James 1:12.

Peter says that *“When the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away” 1 Peter 5:4.*

Jesus is our *Chief Shepherd* (John 10:11). He is the one who came in a manger and welcomed the poorest of the poor shepherds to come and see His glory first. He is our Good Shepherd who laid down His life for us.

In Matthew 2, we read the story of the wise men from the East. They saw Jesus' star and followed it to Him. *“When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshipped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.”*

It seems that these wise men were rich and had everything life could give them - riches, knowledge, and comfort. But they started their journey because were still missing the answer to their significance in life. The purpose of their life was to find the King of Kings and to worship Him. They needed a Saviour. This is why they made such a long journey to find Jesus. Although they had everything they needed, they could not ignore their need to find their Saviour. They had a deep longing to meet the only one who can give us everlasting life. In that moment, when they saw the little Jesus, they fell down and worshipped Him. They presented these extremely valuable presents to a little boy, in whom they recognized God.

Jesus' birth shows us that He welcomes the poorest and the richest. We are all equally in need of a Saviour. In Matthew 25:35, Jesus said: *"I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in."*

How can we keep Christmas in our hearts forever? Someone once said: "If you want to keep Christ in Christmas: feed the hungry, clothe the naked, forgive the guilty, welcome the stranger and unwanted, care for the ill and the elderly, and love your enemies..." Howard Thurman was an American author, theologian, educator, and civil rights leader. He expressed this philosophy in the following poem:

The Work of Christmas

When the song of the angels is stilled,
 When the star in the sky is gone,
 When the kings and princes are home,
 When the shepherds are back with their flock,
 The work of Christmas begins:
 To find the lost,
 To heal the broken,
 To feed the hungry,
 To release the prisoner,
 To rebuild the nations,
 To bring peace among people,
 To make music in the heart.

By Howard Thurman

HOMEWORK:

1. How can you give an example to your children, grandchildren that Christmas will continue in your life?
2. How can you influence them to keep Christ in Christmas?
3. Since God made you rich, at least in spirit, how and when can you make changes in those lives who are poor and needy?

Amen