

ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
COMPASS, PA

December 25, 2020 – CHRISTMAS DAY YR. B

The Rev. Dr. Nina George-Hacker

Homily: *“The Reason for the Season”*

Isaiah 62:6-12 (God proclaims that His salvation has come, and His people are called ‘redeemed’)  
Psalm 97 (The Lord is King, let the earth rejoice!)  
Titus 3:4-7 (Through Christ’s goodness and kindness, we are saved by grace, faith, and baptism)  
St. Luke 2:8-20 (Angels proclaim Jesus’ birth to the shepherds, who go to worship Him)

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Most of you remember watching Charlie Brown and the rest of the “Peanuts” gang pondering the meaning of Christmas on TV every year—except this one. The Christmas special was created in 1965 and those who bankrolled the project thought it would be a failure. It was the first animated TV special based on the comic strip by Charles Schultz. But Charlie Brown Special became part of “Christmas Americana” along with “It’s a Wonderful Life,” and Dr. Seuss’s, “The Grinch that Stole Christmas.”

In the “Peanuts” special, after becoming terribly frustrated with the consumer mentality around him, not to mention how badly things are going with the Christmas play, Charlie Brown, the Director, asks the pivotal question: *“Isn’t there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about?”*

Linus steps on stage and begins quoting Luke 2:8-14: “There were shepherds living in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks by night... An angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shown around them....” Linus reminds us of the true Reason for the Season, the virgin birth of the promised Messiah, the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup>

Christianity historically has affirmed the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. We believe that Jesus is nothing less than the incarnation, the enflesh-ment of God, in whom the fullness of God’s person, character and being dwells in fully divine and fully human form.

The birth of Jesus Christ is the most significant event in the history of humankind. His birth split history into B.C. (before Christ) and A. D. (Anno Domini), “the year of our Lord.” Every time you write a check, celebrate a birthday, fill out an application form, or anytime you use a date, you are using the birth of Jesus Christ as the basis of measuring time.<sup>2</sup>

Christmas was *God’s* idea. He planned when it would happen, how it would happen, where it would happen, and why it would happen. On the night Jesus was born in Bethlehem, God sent an angel to announce His arrival. The God who created the universe, and set the stars in place and the world on its axis says, “I love you, no matter who you are, where you’ve come from, or what you’ve done in your life. Just accept the [undeserved] grace and forgiveness my Son came to offer you, and you will find peace for your heart and for eternity.”

Any time a newborn child is brought home—or the baby’s photos are shared on our phones—friends and family begin to speculate, “Who does he or she look like?” We all play that game with our children and grandchildren. And of course, babies usually look like at least one of their parents, if not both of them.

In Jesus’ case, He looked exactly like His Father, God, because He radiated God’s love and lived out God’s personality characterized by justice and mercy, compassion and healing, creativity and beauty, power and might, wisdom and knowledge.

In 1865 an Episcopal priest, Philip Brooks, visited the fields of Bethlehem. In his diary, Brooks told how he visited the shepherds’ fields, then like the shepherds, he went and worshiped God’s Son. As he headed back to Jerusalem, Brooks looked over his shoulder for one lasting glimpse of the place where God’s Son entered the world to bring salvation to all people. Later, remembering what he had seen; Brooks wrote;

“O Little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie:  
 above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by  
 yet in thy dark streets shineth, the everlasting light;  
 the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.  
 O holy Child of Bethlehem, Descend to us we pray  
 Cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today.

Do you hear those words? “*Cast out our sin...*” That’s why the angel proclaimed, “I bring you good news of great joy which shall be to all people, a savior has been born.” And think of the promise given to Joseph months before: “Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. She will give birth to a son and you shall name Him Jesus for *He will save His people from their sins.*”

As Charlie Brown so poignantly asked, “Isn’t there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about?”<sup>3</sup> Fortunately we know: Jesus is the Reason for the Season—not only at Christmas, but through every season of our lives and on into eternity.

May we never forget why He came, and why He is with us daily: Because “God so loved the world, that He sent His only Son, that whosoever should believe in Him will not perish but have eternal life.”<sup>4</sup> Amen!

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<sup>1</sup> The Christian Post, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Rick Warren, *The Purpose of Christmas* (Howard Books, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> Adapt. Clarence Eisberg, 23 December 2009, “Jesus is the Reason,” [SermonCentral.com](https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/jesus-is-the-reason-clarence-eisberg-sermon-on-christmas-142385) <https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/jesus-is-the-reason-clarence-eisberg-sermon-on-christmas-142385> 7 December 2020. Used with permission.

<sup>4</sup> John 3:16.