

December 24, 2025

Christmas Eve

“God Is Already There”

Isaiah 9:2-7

Micah 5:2-5a

Luke 2:1-20

Sometimes when we read the Christmas narrative, even within the context of a more sedate setting like our candlelight service tonight, it can seem a bit... well... chaotic.

Follow along with me for a moment on this. We have Joseph and Mary hurrying along the road to Joseph’s ancestral town in order to comply with a census that was most likely just a make-work project to annoy the subjugated states and remind the people of the power that Rome had over them. It wasn’t a great time for this young couple to have to travel, considering the imminent birth of their first child, but there they are. And then you have the uncertain chaos of what they encountered when they got to Bethlehem. With all the people descending on the place because of the census, lodging was at a premium. Imagine the two of them rushing (as best they could) along with every other visitor, from place to place and house to house asking if there was any room, only to find at every stop the same response, “There is no room.” Desperate, and at a loss as to what to do, they would have grown more worried, more tired, and more desperate at every closed door. Until finally, some soul had some pity and unconventionally offered lodging with the animals. Not the Ritz Carlton as they might have been hoping for, to be sure. But at least it was a warm place and with a little effort could be made somewhat comfortable. Certainly not the situation one would have expected the Son of God to be born into.

It almost seems like the plan wasn’t going the way it was supposed to, and God was kind of catching up to things. There is no fanfare, no pre-arrival announcement. No making sure things were set into readiness for the arrival of glorious one who was to come. Think of the birth announcement... Years later,

when Jesus was about to begin his active ministry years, John the Baptist went out ahead of time calling for people to prepare the way for the Lord. He was a voice crying in the desert, saying “Attention everyone! The Messiah is coming and you’d best get yourselves ready.” But for Jesus’ birth, nothing was announced until after the fact. Sure, you get the whole angel chorus line, but one has to wonder if they were a bit late. The only audience they have are those lowly shepherds. Where were the gold-leaf invitations to the rich and famous? Did God miss something in all that was happening? Do we miss something in all that was happening?

I would like to offer to you this evening that God did not miss anything. In fact, God was already there before it all happened. Yes, I know that Jesus is “God with us” and that when He was born, God was present in that moment. But I am suggesting that God was already there before Jesus arrived. He was there in that stable before Joseph and Mary got there, before the owner of the stable knew what great thing it would be used for. Before the stable and owner were even on the scene at all. Before any of that, God had determined that Bethlehem would be the place the Messiah would be born. This is the prophetic promise that Micah shared. And so God was already present there, making things ready. He was already there, waiting for the moment when His plan for reconciliation and restoration would come into reality. Even before Micah was naming the place, God was already in place. Isaiah spoke of the need for light to dispel the darkness, that light would come in the form a child, The Child, who is Jesus Christ. This was all part of God’s plan, and He was present and waiting in Bethlehem for the right time for the child to be born.

Why is all this important for us? Well, just as God was already present in Bethlehem where Jesus would be born, before Joseph and Mary even arrived, He is already present in the places where we are. Often people think He is far away, or too big and important to bother with us lowly people. Sometimes we look at what is going on in our lives and think things are so bad that there is no way God is present in the situation. But He is present. He is not far away. He is not too important, and we too unimportant. When you are in a place that seems to be

filled with darkness... God is present. When life is hard or unfair or uncertain, He is there. When you are filled with sorrow, He is there crying alongside you. When things are going well, when joy is filling your world, He is there. When you step forward into the unknown of a new move or job or shift in family dynamics... He is there waiting for you.

Often when Christians gather, we invite God to be present. While it is good to invite God to be present in our lives, we need to also remember that He is already there and is inviting us to be present with Him.

Let's Pray.