

## The Wonder Of Christmas.

Text: Luke 2:11

Suggested Hymns:

- 1) Wonderful in simplicity
- 2) Wonderful in glory
- 3) The wonder of the new born child
- 4) The wonder of God Himself
- 5) The wonder of the message
- 6) The wonder of the holy birth

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our address this Christmas Eve is Luke 2:11, <sup>11</sup> ***“For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.*** (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

This evening we are hearing about the amazing wonder of Christmas presented to us by the Sunday School children in simple hymn verses which present to us a powerful message.

The angel who announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds on the fields of Bethlehem was also messenger of few words. In just three verses of Scripture the message is proclaimed as we read in Luke 2:10-12 ***“Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. <sup>11</sup> “For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup> “And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.”*** Let us consider the wonder of Christmas. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### 1. Wonderful In Simplicity

This first Christmas sermon was a marvel of simplicity. In these simple words everything that needed to be said, was said.

In the years that have followed since the night our Lord was born, this simple sentence sermon of the angel has grown into endless volumes of comment from

the lips and pens of men. The glory of the heavens that flooded the Judean skies that holy night has become a festival of Christmas light around the whole world.

The simple worship of the shepherds in the presence of the ox and ass within the lowly stable has become a glorious and elaborate celebration in cathedrals. The swaddling cloths and manger have blossomed into priestly robes and marble altars.

But sadly, in many cases the sweet simplicity of Christmas and the Christmas Gospel has been lost along the way.

Listen closely to the angel! <sup>12</sup> *“And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.”* That is where you will find him. Not within the royal splendour of Jerusalem, but in a lowly stable in Bethlehem. Not in the palace of the king, but in a small Judean cattle manger. Not in the incense perfumed presence of the high priest, but in the company of animals in a stable and the shepherds who came to worship Him.

Christmas is simply wonderful. Christmas is a simple wonder, and its message comes in simple words. That is what makes it wonder-filled because it is so simply wonderful. It is simple in its message, simple in its circumstance, simple in its characters, and simple in its faith. It is simply wonderful.

If we lose the wonder of this holy season, we lose it because we look in wrong directions. Often people seek its wonders in the beauty of Christmas lights and in the thrill of Christmas pageantry, in anything to complicate the celebration. They forget the simple manger and the simple swaddling cloths.

But if we want a Christmas that is simply wonderful, that is where we have to look. These are the tokens we must mark, and when we find the Christ child there, then our lights will glow much brighter and the Christmas music will have a beauty we have never heard before.

## **2. Wonderful in Glory**

We dare not, of course, forget the glory of this holy night, for Christmas is also simply wonderful in glory. When the Apostle, St. Luke, recorded the event, he scarcely said a word that would identify the deity in Jesus Christ to mark Him as the God of God and Light of Light and very God of very God. He simply told the story of a humble birth in humble circumstances to humble peasant parents.

The decree of Caesar that everybody had to be registered, brought Joseph and Mary, down to Bethlehem, the ancient city of their famous ancestor named David. The town was crowded at the time, the inn was filled, and everywhere they went there was no vacancy. Luke records the birth of Jesus so simply and uncomplicated as we read in Luke 2:6-7, *<sup>6</sup> So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. <sup>7</sup> And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.* That is how it happened — just that simple. A child was born.

### **3. The Wonder Of The New Born Child**

But this was no ordinary child. He was the Son of God. True man and true God. Suddenly a halo formed around the humble setting. Shepherds tending flocks in night-time darkness suddenly were bathed in terrifying light. The voice of an angel from heaven spoke his simple sentence sermon and the heavens echoed with the carol of heavenly hosts.

In the distant eastern sky a star appeared, and a company of eastern Wise Men started on their pilgrimage to Bethlehem to seek the new-born king.

This child is Christ, our God and Lord. The infant as a helpless being cared for by His mother is Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father and the Prince of Peace. The fullness of the time had come. God had sent forth His Son, made of a woman. The Word has become flesh to dwell among us. God who in times past spoke to our fathers by the prophets, now speaks to us in the most glorious revelation of them all — through his Son. This is the simple wonder of the Christmas glory that the infant, virgin-born of Mary, is our God! This makes Christmas simply wonderful!

When we look at the wonder of Christmas we realise that this is no ordinary Child and we have no ordinary God!

### **4. The Wonder Of God Himself**

If the Christmas Gospel tells us that the child of Bethlehem is not an ordinary child, it is much more concerned with telling us that the God of heaven is not an ordinary god. That the infant is our God and Lord is one side of the coin, and it may terrify us. But the other side is this, that God has become an infant, that He

has appeared in human flesh and blood, that He has taken to Himself the form of a servant and is made in the likeness of men.

The majestic Lord of heaven, the Creator of the earth, terrible and terrifying in His holiness and in His glory, is born a baby Boy. Where in all the record of the religions that humans have invented can you find a god like this God who created humans and who Himself became a human.

God does not hide Himself behind the veil of His majestic glory. He does not remain beyond our hearing and the heart-beat of our human need and tears. He does not come to speak a word of vengeance and to wield the sceptre of His righteousness and execute His judgment.

No, He assumes our human flesh and blood to take the burden of our guilt upon Himself and save us from our sins and from our death. He appears in simple form to declare the love of God for us and this makes Christmas simply wonderful.

This does not explain the lowly circumstances in which the Christ was born, but certainly it helps us to understand it. The mighty God appeared in swaddling cloths and in a manger — why not in robes of royal purple and in the palace of a king? He was born of Mary, a simple peasant maiden from a village in the hinterland of Galilee — why not to a woman from the ranks of royalty? His birthplace was a little town of Bethlehem, the least of all of Judah's towns — why not Jerusalem, the ancient capital of Israel, site of the holy temple, the home of Israel's important people? The message first was carolled to the shepherds on the fields of Bethlehem — why not to the Pharisees and Sadducees and to the company of priests and Levites?

### **5. The Wonder Of The Message**

This message must get through — this Man receives sinners! This message must get through — Jesus has come to be the Saviour of the world and not the private property of some select and segregated few who are conscious of their class distinctions and the colour of their skin and their clean and wholesome living standard.

This message must get through — in Christ we have a Saviour sent from God who is our Brother, who can be touched with the grief of our infirmities. And this is how God gets the message through, not just by saying so, but doing so.

This is the way He invites us to Himself — he becomes as one of us, as small as us, the pledge and promise of God’s love for us. There is no greater consolation God has given us than this that He became a Man, a Child, a Baby — to bear our sins and save us. This is the simple wonder, that God has come from the other side of majesty and glory so that we can see Him on our side in swaddling cloths and in a manger.

God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. He has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty. No flesh shall glory in His presence. This is what it took — not a dignified way, but the way of the manger and the cross. This is the Christ we need — not a mighty Conqueror of nations, but a Servant suffering for sinners. This is the Christ we look for — the Christ who makes our Christmas simply wonderful — not for analysis in science laboratories, but for acceptance with a child-like faith.

The angel said, <sup>12</sup> ***“And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.”*** It is the last place we might expect to find him, but, thank God, this is the place we do find Him. If we want a simply wonderful Christmas, this is where we still find the Christ Child. We find Him among the lowly, the poor in spirit, the humble, the oppressed, the sorrowing. He comes to us along our pathways where we least expect. He confronts us in the presence of the hungry and the thirsty, the rejected and the homeless, the lonely and the ill, the burdened and the bored.

And you will hear it from His lips, ***“As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.”*** The joy of Christmas is not determined by the extravaganza we can stage. It does not depend upon our state of health or state of wealth. Christmas is a simple wonder in a simple way as expressed by Scripture and the hymns we sing.

## **6. The Wonder Of The Holy Birth**

Take notice of the wonders surrounding the holy birth. On the night of Jesus’ birth there were shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem, tending flocks. In the dark Judean sky the glory of the Lord appeared and an angel sent from heaven told the shepherds of the Saviour’s birth.

In the eastern skies a special star appeared to guide the Wise Men to the newborn king. Mary was a virgin and the holy child is God's own Son. These are miracles and truly wonderful. These are historical facts.

But in the simplest, yet the greatest, wonder of them all, is that in the fullness of time, God fulfilled His promise and God came to earth and God became an infant human being to bear our guilt of sin and die our death for us and rise again to bring His life to us. He became a Man and He identified Himself with us so that through all eternity we can be His own to live forever with Him in heaven.

Dare we never forget this wonder. Christmas is simply wonderful, and therefore let us be truly wonder-filled! Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.