



Wednesday, December 25, 2025  
Luke 2:1-20 (Christmas Eve)

Ascension Lutheran Church  
Pastor Tony Acompanado

Take a moment and look around. Look around and see how many of us showed up tonight. Family, friends, people you know, and others you've never seen before. And it's like this year after year after year.

Some of you are here because you really want to be or need to be here. Some of you are here because *someone else* really wants you to be or needs you to be here. Some of you are here because it's what you've done every Christmas Eve. Some of you are regular church attenders, and it's no surprise that you're here tonight. For others, Christmas may be one of the few days that you attend church, but it's no surprise that you're here tonight either. For some of you this is the best night of the year, and for others this is one of the most difficult.

And some of you come tonight with great anticipation and joy while others struggle to get through the season. I say all that filled with wonder and amazement. And truth be told, I'm not all that concerned about *if you do, or how often, or why you come* to church. Because tonight there is something so much bigger and so much more important that captivates me. And every year, without fail, I'm amazed at the power of the Christmas story to call us together on this night.

So let me be completely clear about something. Regardless of who you are, or why you're here, or how often you do or don't come to church, or what has happened or not happened in your life, or what you have done or left undone...the Christmas story is for you! And I promise you it's unfolding all around you every moment of every day whether you see it taking place or not.

So many of us struggle to see God in the midst of depressing news headlines. And so many more wonder where God is in their own more private pain of broken relationships, lost loved ones, loneliness, illness, job loss, anxiety, or depression. Or maybe it's just that we get caught up in the day-to-day routines of making ends meet that we have a hard time imagining that God could possibly make a difference in our world.

*"But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord."*

Long ago, on that most holy night an angel of the Lord spoke profoundly beautiful words of hope fulfilled to unsuspecting shepherds as they were out in the fields, minding their own business, keeping watch over their flocks by night. I imagine it must have been a terrifying and overwhelming experience.

And in an instant, their peaceful and quiet night, and ours along with the rest of humanity across every time and place, was shattered by the most incredible proclamation of all time. Those shepherds were right to be surprised, and we should be too. In fact we should all be overwhelmed. Because on that night, the most wonderful night of all time, God came down from heaven to be with us. Emmanuel – **God with us!**

Luke's gospel tells us that the shepherds went quickly and with a strong sense of purpose to Bethlehem to see *"what the Lord had made known to them"* and when they saw it, they went from that place and *"made known what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them."*

When the shepherds saw Jesus, their world was turned upside down. What do you imagine the shepherds told them? Did they tell about standing in the light of the divine? Did they admit they were terrified? Did they tell about the angel's announcement of *"good news of great joy for all the people?"* Maybe they said that they heard a choir of angels praising God. I wonder. I wonder if they looked at the child lying in a manger and said, "The angel told us about him. He's the one we've been waiting for."

I don't know exactly *what* the shepherds told them, but whatever it was, it amazed all who heard it and I imagine it filled them with awe and wonder.



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So what is it that's so amazing about this story that two thousand years later we're still telling it? What's so amazing that we come back year after year to hear a story that we've already heard and probably know by heart? What is it about this story that amazes *you* and brought *you* here tonight?

But I'm not asking about your amazement at what happened to the shepherds, or to Mary and Joseph. No, I want to understand the power and meaning of this story for *your lives* tonight. I'm asking about how this story is amazing for *you*, in *your life* and in *your circumstances* tonight. I don't want to know about *their* amazing story...I already know that story. I want to know about *your* amazing story.

Is it a story about recovering hope when you thought everything was lost, finding freedom and forgiveness for past guilts and regrets, or facing and moving beyond your fears? Maybe it's a story of discovering light, meaning, and direction for your life when you were walking in darkness, or getting your life turned around and finally going in a new direction. Maybe your amazing story is about experiencing peace in a time of chaos or getting through another day when you didn't think you could even get out of bed. It might be a story about how your life was put back together when you weren't even sure you had all the pieces. Maybe it's a story about love and intimacy, abundance and gratitude, healing and wholeness. Maybe it's a story about feeling a presence so much greater and beyond yourself.

Every one of those and countless others just like them is an amazing story of Christmas and they all begin with the gift of this child lying in a manger. And we come this night – returning once again, or perhaps for the very first time, to receive this special child into the manger of our own lives.

The birth of Jesus is about God coming to us and saying, "Don't be afraid, I'm here. It's about God meeting us in our pain and loneliness. It's about God meeting us in our frustration and anger. It's about God meeting us Monday and Wednesday and every day. It's about God showing up to be a part of every moment of our lives.

It doesn't matter who you are, or why you're here, or how you came to be here, or what has and hasn't happened in your life – the angel's announcement of "*good news of great joy for all the people*" is the fulfillment of a promise given to all of us. And sometimes the most amazing thing about this story is that it's happening even when we don't see it or can't yet believe it.

This amazing story began with the shepherds, but it continues with us. It's now *your* story and *my* story. And in whatever ways it penetrates our hearts, our minds, our emotions, and all that we hold dear to us – it will forever be a story centered on **God's grace and love for us** – and what could possibly be more amazing than that.

The birth of Jesus reminds us that we are invited to celebrate *this* Christmas and *every* Christmas with hope and joy, because in the midst of all the grief, uncertainty, loneliness, loss, struggling, pain, and death – God is with us. Emmanuel, God with us!

This is what we've been waiting for. Our Advent waiting has led us to this moment. So pay close attention to this amazing thing that has happened, because the Christmas story doesn't *end* with the birth of Jesus. That's only where it began. This is the beginning of your story and my story. This thing that has happened is calling and asking something of you and me. Because it's not simply a story to tell, it's a story to live.

This thing that has happened is desiring and wanting you. This thing that has happened is the coming of life and the future. This thing that has happened is insisting hope, peace, joy, love, forgiveness, mercy,



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generosity, healing, gentleness, reconciliation, and compassion in each of our lives. And this thing that has happened is awaiting our response.

So perhaps after we've lingered in the presence of this amazing child a bit longer, I wonder if we might leave this night, running from the manger to live this incredible story to its fullest – allowing our words and our actions to be the good news of great joy for all the people. That's what the birth of Jesus means. Joy to the world, the Lord is come! **Merry Christmas!**