

## Messy Messiah

King of Glory Lutheran Church  
Pastor Ruth Ann Loughry  
December 24, 2023 – Christmas Eve

Luke 2:1-20

<sup>1</sup>In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup>This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup>All went to their own towns to be registered. <sup>4</sup>Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. <sup>5</sup>He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup>While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. <sup>7</sup>And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

<sup>8</sup>In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup>Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup>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: <sup>11</sup>to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup>This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” <sup>13</sup>And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup>“Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

<sup>15</sup>When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” <sup>16</sup>So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup>When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; <sup>18</sup>and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. <sup>19</sup>But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup>The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

***Our lives get messy. Jesus, God’s Son is the Messiah – the Savior – born into a mess and our messes. That’s the way God planned it! He is born for you!***

*(song) Have yourself a messy little Christmas, Jesus will draw near. Open up your heart tonight and have no fear. Have yourself a messy little Christmas, Jesus will draw near. Open up your heart tonight and have no fear.*

Yes, have yourself a messy little Christmas because that's exactly what the first Christmas was like. God's people were living under oppression and occupation. They were laden with heavy taxes from Rome and lived in fear of the authorities. Century after century, they had watched their land be taken away in war. Still waiting for Messiah to come, the people had come to Bethlehem under orders of a census. Christians call this darkness sin. But what a mess.

Into the back streets of Bethlehem came a very ordinary man and his young wife. Joseph was a carpenter, and Mary, she, a virgin. Yet they were also incredibly special...as she was pregnant with God's child.

So many people in town. A mass of humanity had descended upon the village. Again and again, they were turned away from a place to sleep. Finally, they found a quiet stable with fresh, clean straw and a few wide-eyed animals to keep them company. Mary gave birth...as only women do...it got difficult, unpleasant and messy, but it was holy. Yes, holy. Love was born that night. A child was born for you; a Messiah, the Savior.

Raise your hand if you love Christmas! Yes – me too! I know that you've had a perfect time getting ready for Christmas. Because people that come to church are always perfect people. You ordered your Christmas gifts from Amazon way back in November. They were wrapped by December 1<sup>st</sup>. Your children - both the young ones and the adult ones - are always well-behaved. The turkey came out smelling delicious just an hour before you came to church. Tomorrow will be a perfect day with perfect family members, perfect gifts and perfect love. Just like Martha Stewart would plan. Right?

No. Wrong! Perfect?! Pisha! We're all more like "Modern Family". Christmas is fabulous and while baking and decorating is fun, it takes time and energy.

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Planes, trains and automobiles take us to our destinations but the mass of humanity waiting in lines can be stressful!

Family gatherings are joyful reunions, except for that one challenging personality, or newly divorced, or unresolved conflict that gets carefully avoided every year.

It is a blessing to look around the table and see our loved ones....and we remember those who are missing.

There is peace in our hearts as we sing ‘Silent Night’ and war drones are flying.

Let’s be real, we love Christmas! We truly do. But let’s state two truths at once, because we hold this tension all the time. Christmas is fabulous. And since none of us are perfect, Christmas for we humans can at times, be chaotic, awkward, stressful and messy.

But the truth is it’s always been that way from the very beginning! Jesus’ name means ‘anointed one’, the Messiah, our Savior. Jesus, was born into a world in disarray. That’s the way God planned it!

God chose two nobodies to be the parents of God’s Son. Jesus was not born in a palace with servants and a crib rimmed with gold. He was born with an audience of animals: sweet breath and steaming piles. If you’ve ever mucked out a barn before, you know what muck there was to welcome God. Phew! It was God’s plan.

*Jesus, God’s Son is the Messiah – the Savior – born into a mess and our messes. Jesus willingly put on flesh and came to earth, into the middle of the chaos. That’s the way God planned it! Christ is born for you!*

God knew part of the mess was love of power, so God gave birth to the power of love. Power of love came into the world; ready to heal the sick, find the lost, restore the broken. Having a Messiah, a Savior, doesn’t mean all our ‘troubles will be miles away’. Instead, Jesus comes to meet us in those very moments. His name is also Emmanuel: God with us. **Into the messiness of our lives Christ brings calm. Peace. Strength. Love. Forgiveness.**

Two stories. I was working as a chaplain in a hospital when I got a call to the Emergency Room. A man had experienced a heart-attack. When I opened the door to his room, he looked white as a sheet. I introduced myself as the chaplain on call and said, “I hear you’ve had a heart-attack. How are you feeling?”

“Well, I was doing fine, until they told me they called you!”  
God bless him. He didn’t know yet what he didn’t know.

In another room, doing my rounds on that same day, I said to a woman about to have surgery, “You are so peaceful.” She replied with a quiet confidence. “Yes, I am. God is right here with me!” God bless her. She knew.

Where do you need a Savior this night for all of your messiness? Is it time to ask forgiveness? Or offer forgiveness? Perhaps you need some healing or hope? Maybe rest from a weary journey? Strength for justice and advocacy? Christ born in Bethlehem is born for you. He is Emmanuel – God with us.

God who took on flesh will come and sit with you and love you in it and through it. God doesn't push his way into our lives. Jesus shows us again and again of His presence and waits patiently to be invited. He is our Savior.

Christ is born for you, you, you, everyone one in this room and beyond. He will never abandon us or all of creation until it is all redeemed and restored. He comes in Love as our Savior, the Messiah, entering into the glorious messiness of our lives. What a reason to have yourself a Merry, Merry Christmas! Amen.