

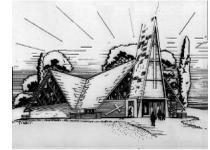


Free Evangelical Lutheran  
Synod in South Africa

## Sermon for Christmas Eve (Proper Christmas Dawn C)

### The loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared!

St. John's Lutheran Parish



Shelly Beach

### The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Titus 3, 4-7:

<sup>ESV</sup> 4 But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared,

- 5 He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,
- 6 whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour,
- 7 so that being justified by His grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

• *Let us pray: Come Holy Spirit, open our ears, open the eyes of our heart to see Your salvation and rejoice! Amen.*

### • Dear Beloved of the Lord!

• We are gathered here tonight, because some 2015 years ago, the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared! While the rest of the world was in darkness, the angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds and proclaimed the best news that has ever been heard on this earth. This is the message of hope and good news proclaimed by the messenger from God MOST HIGH.

• The angel said [10]: *"Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for the whole of the people."* Nobody is excluded from this mega joy. A great joy for the whole of the people of Israel is meant here. This joy is for all, the babies, children, elderly, the strong, the weak, those on the fringes of society, the sinners, a great joy for all! It is good news. Therefore, fear not! And now the message becomes more specific [11]: *"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. ..."* The Saviour is born. The anointed One. The Messiah who is the Lord. And He has something to do with king David. He is born in Bethlehem, which means the house of bread!

• And the angel carries on and says [12]: *"And this will be a sign for you: you will*

*find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.*" Strange isn't it? God's anointed Saviour is born, Christ, Lord, and yet the shepherds need a sign to find Him! But God has no problem with this, He gives them a sign, namely, a baby, you will find an infant, and this baby will be wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.

• The long-awaited Messiah for the whole of Israel, lying in a manger, a food-trough for the animals. For some farmer boys the smell of animal food and trough might be home sweet home, but in general, this is not where you would expect the Saviour of the whole of Israel, later to be extended to the whole of the world, to be spending its first night.

• But, this was meant to be, because this detail together with the other detail "wrapped in swaddling cloths" which is mentioned twice confirms that this boy was indeed the Son of David, the Messiah.

• In Wisdom of Solomon 7, Solomon, king David's son, recounts how he asked not for wealth or power, but only Wisdom. The son of David goes on to describe how, even though he, in his time, was the greatest of all the kings of the earth, he was born like all others: *"And when I was born, I began to breathe the common air, and fell upon the kindred earth, and my first sound was a cry, like that of all. I was nursed with care in swaddling cloths. For no king has had a different beginning of existence; there is for all mankind one entrance into life, and a common departure."*

• Just like king Solomon king Jesus is not about flashy and loud extravagance, surrounded by material wealth and power, but rather about the Wisdom of God. And the Wisdom of God is that His goodness and loving kindness has appeared in this special baby.

• But, this special baby boy, although He is Christ the Lord is wrapped in our cloths, is placed in a manger, which tops the humility of king Solomon by far.

• The Lord becomes part of His creation. We have God's loving kindness and goodness in, with, under and through a person, through a body of the first

creation, wrapped in strips of cloth made by human beings. Seemingly completely non-spiritual. He enters deeply into our world, into our physical world, like a birth—that is something very physical. And so much so that indeed nobody is below Him.

• And in this highly physical baby body and poor circumstances the goodness and loving kindness of our Lord appeared. So unfitting it seems, especially for pious people, those who thought that they knew God, those who thought that they were filled with the Spirit of God. They were the ones who would later on take offence of this Messiah who would dine with the sinners and forgive the sins of the paralytic and of the tax-collectors and of the whores. Who would later on invite the children to be brought to Him, and He would embrace them and bless them and say to those who couldn't understand it, unless you enter the kingdom of God like a child you will never enter it.

• All of this proclaims and shouts, this is indeed God's Way of salvation. This is not how we would do it. He does this. He is at work here. He is a humble God. He is kind. He does not push away the insignificant, the weak in Spirit.

• Nothing is out of place, or out of control. Everything is as it should be. Everything is fitting. God's Scriptures are being fulfilled. God saves us according to His own Way, according to His own mercy, as Titus records. His Way may seem too worldly, too lowly, too common, not spiritual enough, not miraculous enough, but it is just right.

• [5] *“He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, ...”*. John refers to this act of God, as being born by water and the spirit.

Paul refers to this same act of God in the following way: *“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that He might present the church to Himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.”*

Baptism.

• God saved us through His Messiah, who would later on again be wrapped in cloths, this time lying in a grave, because He was born to be our crucified Saviour. God's Messiah took the lonely low road, from the beginning which culminated in His death for all people. By the fruits of His death we live. And so as we are baptised, we are being justified by His Grace. We become heirs of His Life. We are baptised into His Body, into the very same Body that was lying in the manger.

• This Body has grown, resurrected and ascended to heaven, and all who are baptised and believe belong to this Body. So that in a way, as we gather as baptised believers, around baby Jesus, we see the beginning of the Church, the birth of Christ's Body, and if we lift our eyes and look around us, we see the growth of Christ's Body, the fruit of God's salvation all around us.

Yes, you all look quite normal, but isn't that the very signature of God's salvation on earth! As we are gathered around Him, aren't we like the swaddling cloths of Jesus? Like Mary and Joseph cared for Him, through faith, we care for Jesus too, because He has saved us! **Amen.** *"Grace be with all of you!" Amen.* [<sup>ESV</sup> Heb 13,25]