

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

“And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.”

Bede the Venerable lived in the late 600s and early 700s AD and was born in what is modern day England. He was a theologian who was classically educated and respected. He is most known for his, *An Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. Commenting on this text before you this evening, Bede makes this statement, “He who sits at the right hand of the Father goes without shelter from the inn, that he may for us get ready many mansions in the house of his heavenly Father. . . He was born not in the house of his parents but at the inn, by the wayside, because through the mystery of the incarnation he is become the Way by which he guides us to our home, where we shall also enjoy the Truth and the Life.”

Bede’s words resonate. The striking contrasts of Christmas boldly show you the great mercy and love of God for you in Jesus. Think about that for a second. God who created all things comes down and there is no room for him in the inn [or guest room] and he is laid in a manger. But why? Jesus said in John 14, ““Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.” Jesus is laid in the manger so that you would and do have a dwelling place with God forever.

This night the darkness of sin, death, and the devil are scattered. From the manger, the Light of World, Jesus, shines upon you. You see the baby who was born and placed into the manger is none other than God in the flesh. But that’s not the end of it. Jesus wasn’t just born but there’s a purpose to it. Listen to the preacher of Christmas, the angel, and what was said to the shepherds, “And the angel said to them, ‘Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.’” Jesus didn’t come into world with pomp and riches or even with a place to lay his head for no reason. Jesus came and did this for you. The Savior, Jesus is born for you.

Dear people of God behold you Savior, Jesus Christ. Born of the Virgin Mary he is the eternal Son of God in the flesh who came to live perfectly and fulfill God’s law and suffer in your place the wrath of God against your sin. God had this planned out even before the foundation of the world. His love for you in Christ chose you to be his own. He knew what he was doing when he was born in Bethlehem, this was his fulfilling his plan to save you. You were on his mind when he came down from heaven. He sacrificed and suffered all even death on the cross so that your sin is forgiven and you would be with him forever. That’s the scope of God’s love for you in Christ that you see at Christmas and every day. God dwells with his people to save them.

That God would dwell with his people for the expressed purpose of taking on their sin and suffering the wrath of God in their place is mind boggling. That great reversal is God’s mercy and grace to you in Christ. It’s a scandal to the world and the devil, the world, and our fallen

flesh which try to tempt you to be scandalized by the Christ. To behold Jesus is to behold your Savior. But there's something also sobering about this fact; you're a sinner. If you weren't a sinner or could be saved on your own then there would be no point to Christmas, Good Friday, or Easter. Your sin is an objective reality. It doesn't matter whether you think you are a sinner or not or whether you disagree with God's word. You can try and push these things outside of your mind and dismiss them, but the fact of the matter remains you have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and what you deserve is death and hell. The Lord can't be mocked, and he laughs at those who hold him in derision. They, those who reject him, will receive their final reward there will be no peace on earth for them. God calls you at Christmas and every day to repent and turn from sin.

See the baby Jesus and see why he came and what he has done. He is the Savior. He is your Savior and the Savior of all people. To look at Christmas then, in this light, is to see off in the distance of this silent night the bloody spectacle of the cross and screams of agony that Jesus would endure. You see him wrapped in swaddling cloths and the day would come when his body was wrapped in a burial shroud and laid in a tomb. You see the shepherds coming to the baby and in his future would come the first day of the week when women came to the tomb to find it empty. The angels proclaimed the birth of the Lord and angels announced that the Lord has risen from the dead.

That's the wonderful thing about this day and the whole life of Jesus. God in Christ reconciles the world to himself and now in him there is peace. The blood of Jesus cleanses you from all sin. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, your sin is placed on him and he in turn gives you all that he has won. The Jesus of Christmas is the same Jesus yesterday, today, and forever.

Rejoice with all God's people. Rejoice in the Lord here who came to save. God in the flesh with us, Emanuel. "O Jesus Christ, thy manger is my paradise at which my soul reclineth. For there, O Lord, doth lie the Word made flesh for us; herein thy grace forth shineth." Those wonderful words which have been sung in the church for centuries preach to you and it's your confession of what Christmas is and always will be as God has revealed this to you. Here in this lowly place is the one who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life who was born to take your guilt and punishment for your sin, what you owe God, upon himself. He came to conquer death and overthrow the devil and all his works and ways.

"The world may hold her wealth and gold; but thou, my heart, keep Christ as thy true treasure. To him hold fast until at last a crown be thine and honor in full measure." Let that be said of you as you gather tonight and as you go from this place. Dear Christians, who rejoice this night you have Christ who is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. Your treasure is found in and known in this baby born in Bethlehem. Your reward and crown will be great when you are with the Lord forever, and your body is raised from its grave and you behold him face to face and dwell forever in the new heavens and the new earth.

This baby born in Bethlehem is your God who came to save you and he has. God is man, man to deliver. He has done it and it's yours in body and soul. You are baptized into Christ and are an heir of eternal life. Fall before the Lord and give him all glory and honor. Confess your sin and

cling to Christ crucified who is your forgiveness, life, salvation, and righteousness before the throne of God. He is yours and you are his and no one can tear you away from him. The angels preached to the shepherds that wonderful unchanging truth for them and it's preached to you tonight, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

Take all these words to heart as you behold your Lord. Follow the example of the shepherds after they heard this message. They give you an example of what the Christian faith looks like and how it's lived. It wasn't let's run away or let's keep tending our flocks because we're feeding and clothing Bethlehem with these sheep so this is more important than going to where Jesus is found. No, it was something else. They understood and knew where they needed to be. "When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.' And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them." That, right there is what, the Christian life looks like when it hears this Gospel of Christmas. It hears God's word and says, "Amen Lord! I will go where you say and find you where you are to be found because you are the Savior who is Christ the Lord! And from this I will confess who you are before all the world."

Go where Jesus is found now in word and sacraments. The Lord hasn't departed and left you as orphans. He is still here and his Church is his bride. You are his people. Keep coming back to where Jesus is the Savior for you in his Scriptures, your baptism, his absolution, his Supper, and all these gifts here in the Church. Christmas, like Easter, are not isolated. No Jesus continues to come to you and for you so keep coming back to where he is and rejoice in your Lord.

Bede was right about the Lord having no shelter so that you would have a dwelling place with God. Take that beautiful truth and reality of what you have in Jesus with you tonight. Ponder and give thanks for the great lengths of God's love toward you in Christ and are known in Jesus and his life, death, and resurrection. When you see images of Jesus in the manger rejoice in the fact that you have a room prepared for you in the home of your Father.

It's Christmas dear people of God. For the grace of God has appeared. The fullness of time has come. What a wonderful thing this is to gather here tonight. The Christmas story is for you. Treasure these words as Mary would treasure all these things in her heart. Rejoice and give thanks that the Lord has come. Light has scattered the darkness. You will dwell with God and all saints in a new creation which is a glory beyond compare. The quiet night bursts open with the sound of salvation, your salvation, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." Glory to God in the highest, now and forever.

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.