

Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

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December 25, 2011

Nativity of Jesus Christ

Christmas Day

Isaiah 52:7-10

- ⁷ How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of the messenger who announces peace,
who brings good news,
who announces salvation,
who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."
⁸ Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices,
together they sing for joy;
for in plain sight they see
the return of the LORD to Zion.
⁹ Break forth together into singing,
you ruins of Jerusalem;
for the LORD has comforted his people,
he has redeemed Jerusalem.
¹⁰ The LORD has bared his holy arm
before the eyes of all the nations;
and all the ends of the earth shall see
the salvation of our God.

John 1:1-14

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

¹⁰He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹²But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

"Gloria in Excelsis Deo"

Gloria in Excelsis Deo! (sing) Gloria in excelsis Deo, Gloria in excelsis Deo.

It is Latin. Ah, Latin. Glory to God in the Highest. Glory to God in the Highest. It is that night song of the Angels.

**Angels we have heard on high,
Sweetly singing o'er the plains,
And the mountains in reply
Echoing their joyous strains.
Gloria in excelsis Deo; Gloria in excelsis Deo.**

It is that night song of the angels. And on this Christmas Day and the other 364 days of the year we are the angels of this age. This is our song.

"And what to my wondering eyes will appear but a miniature sleigh and 8 tiny reindeer." We are the wonder of the eye to those looking in this world. This is our song—not the sleigh and the 8 tiny reindeer, but the Glory to God in the Highest.

As that becomes not only our song on Christmas Day but our life-song...when that becomes our resume' the world receives us with the angel's song. As we take it in—and as we receive it as a gift—this little Latin phrase becomes the angel song of our life. "Glory to God in the Highest!" What if that were your response to your life and the events which come along.

Yes the joyous events, but also the challenges. What if “Glory to God in the Highest” was your heart-beat both on the Gold Star Days and Blue Holidays? What if others heard that melody in you: “Gloria in excelsis Deo.”

**Shepherds why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tiding be
Which inspire your heavenly song?
Gloria in excelsis Deo; Gloria in excelsis Deo.**

On most nights those shepherds of old did not have much to sing about. Maybe there was a “whistle while you work” going on, but surely not much to sing about. They were not exactly living the high life. They had the third shift. They had the in the dark and in the cold shift.

The majority of the time it was not exciting work. It was work...it was real work...it was not easy, but it also was not very thrilling. But on that night “the heavens were telling the glory of God and the firmament proclaimed his handiwork.”

On that night they saw and heard and experienced. On that night they stepped out of their cast and made their way to find this incredible thing they had heard about. They did not deserve to be the recipients of the story, but they were presented with it. And they took it and told it and we are told they left that worship service there in the stable “praising God for all they had seen and heard.”

We are those shepherds still. Our life is probably not the glamorous life. And that is not only okay, it is real and how it is to be. Our life isn't

the glamorous life because it is the chosen life. We were chosen to the recipients of this story and news. And we are to shepherd it. We are to step out with it. We are to tend it and lead it and be led by it.

You are the tender of it. If it is to grow, it will be because you have tended it and attended to it in your life. The call of Christmas is to shepherd it all the year through. We are to shepherd the reality of being chosen to live and tell the truth: “Gloria in excelsis Deo.”

**Come to Bethlehem and see
Him whose birth the angels sing
Come adore on bended knee
Christ the Lord the new born King.
Gloria in excelsis Deo; Gloria in excelsis Deo.**

It was not Hollywood. It was not the Big Apple. It was not even Bel Air. It was Bethlehem. Lowly little Bethlehem—there was not much too it. But it was the place. It was the place where the God of all creation took on flesh and was born to life.

It was the place of that stable and manger. It was the place of shepherds and Mary and Joseph displaced. It was the place of “no room in the inn.” Yet it was the place where God took on flesh. It was the place of “and you shall name him Jesus. Immanuel. God With Us.”

It was Bethlehem...the place God selected. It would not have been the most popular place or the best place or the perfect pick but it was the place that God selected. And from that place God would save the world.

See, we are Bethlehem. We are the place. The world may not pick us. We may not even select ourselves. But God does. God selects us. God

chooses us as the place where incarnation happens. We are the place where with our flesh God meets us.

“Broken for you.” “Poured out for you.”

We are the place...and if we open ourselves to the Savior—if we open ourselves to hold him—even as if we ourselves were the manger of Bethlehem...if we do that we become the place where God dwells.

“God with us.” Baby Jesus. Sure. But more than that. The very one who from the cross rises to life that cannot be put down—we become that Bethlehem place. We become that place with God where nothing can take us because our life is “in Christ.” Our life is that sound byte. Our life is that melody. Our life is that song. Our life is that place where we live it out—where we live out “Glory to God in the Highest.” “Gloria in excelsis Deo.”

Amen.