

December 24, 2014

"Who Would Send A Baby?"

Luke 2:11-12

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When you hold a little baby in your arms ... when you watch an infant sleep ... when you see a tiny baby yawn and stretch ... when a little child grabs hold of your finger ... when you see a newborn baby cry and scream, then settle down and snuggle quietly in the arms of a parent ... there is a tenderness, a melting of the heart, a warmth that is like no other.

A baby is a fragile, delicate life ... a vulnerable little bundle. And what human heart is not moved or softened by the sight ... by the touch ... by the sounds and smells of a baby? Babies can stir the heart and the soul mightily, can't they?

But would you send a baby out to fight against crime? To win a war? To stand up to a bully? Would you send a baby to try to soothe the racial tensions in our cities? To defeat the ISIS forces in the Middle East? To chase down the hackers in North Korea?

A baby? A baby is cute, sweet, cuddly ... and a baby can definitely move human hearts and stir human souls. But we're living in a grown-up world that seems crazier and more messed-up every day! None of us would send a baby, would we, to address our world's most serious and sinister problems?

But our God did precisely that! What a shock those angel words must have been, on that first Christmas: "Unto you is born this day a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.... You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."

A baby? Really?

I think most people living in Bethlehem back then would have said, "We need something more than a baby, Lord!" They were dealing with a murderous maniac ruling their region, Herod the Great. And he was only ruling at the pleasure of Caesar August, the manipulative, power-hungry sole ruler of the massive Roman Empire. And the people of the Holy Land had legions of Caesar's hostile troops occupying their towns and cities, watching their every move, breathing down their necks.

Like us, the people back then were facing all kinds of violence, corruption, and evil every single day! And they'd been waiting for the Savior to come for hundreds and thousands of years!

And now, when the long-promised Messiah -- the great hope of Israel, the Chosen One -- finally arrives to save the day, he's not a warrior. He's not a champion. He's not an imposing physical specimen, a political power broker, or even a celebrity. He has no army, no troops, not even an entourage. He has no weapons, no wealth, not even a bed to sleep in.

He's just a baby! Who would send a baby?

What was God saying, on that first Christmas? What was the message, to the people back then -- and to us tonight? God purposely sent a baby. He didn't have to. He chose to. What was God's message, in sending a tiny, helpless, squirming baby?

It's so important, every year at Christmas, to behold the Christ Child, to look with eyes of faith on the baby Jesus. God wants us -- not just the shepherds and Wise Men and Mary and Joseph -- to see this baby.

God wants us all to know Christ as a baby. Not just Christ the Ruler of all creation. Not just Christ the resurrected Lord of life. Not just Christ, the sacrificial Lamb of God. Not just Christ the teacher, the healer, the friend of sinners, the miracle worker. But also, and especially, God wants us to notice tonight, to witness, to catch sight of his precious Son, our beloved Savior, as a tiny little baby. For in that baby, there is a powerful and essential message for all of us, and for all the world.

Look at the Christ Child -- so small, so tender, so fragile! See his little hands, his wispy hair, his soft cheeks! Imagine holding him, rocking him, embracing him.

God is saying to you this night, "I am not here to force you to believe in me. I've not come to intimidate you and scare you into obeying me. Just the opposite! I'm not going to grab power and seize control in any of the ways that you might expect me to. I'm not here," God is saying, "to address your agenda in the world, but mine."

"I've sent a baby," God says to us on this Christmas Eve, "because I want to win your hearts. I want to move your spirits. I want you to experience, in the Baby Jesus, a tenderness, a melting of your heart, and a warmth that is like no other."

Who would send a baby? Only a God of deep, deep love. Only a God of great compassion. Only a tender-hearted, gentle God.

He doesn't wish to punish us as we deserve for our sins. He sent a Baby -- to move our hearts and stir our spirits to embrace in faith how Jesus took our place on the cross and paid for our sins. God doesn't want to legislate our obedience, or dictate our religious response to him. He sent a Baby -- to warm our hearts to a joyful, cheerful, sincere

kind of worship. God doesn't want us defeated by the world's problems and terrorized by the forces of evil around us. He sent a Baby -- to show us his true heart and the purity of his love, so that we might never lose hope but always trust in God's eternal plan and revel in his everlasting love for us, no matter what trials and hardships we face.

God sent a life-changing message, when he sent a Baby to our world on the first Christmas. I pray you all receive that message of love and mercy, as you behold the Christ Child tonight. The Baby Jesus -- your Savior, your Friend, your God of love! Amen.