

Isaiah 9:2-7
Titus 2:11-14
Luke 2:1-20

Christmas Eve Sermon 2023 *God Is Calling Us on a New Adventure*

When I think of the Christmas season, I think of the word nostalgia, the reminiscing of Christmas traditions that we grew up with that we hold dear in our hearts (**Image One:** scene from Rudolph Christmas special). That we try so hard to keep going. For example, having a certain day when we put up the Christmas tree each year. Or always putting the star on last. Or wearing matching Christmas pajamas. Or wearing matching sweaters for the annual Christmas photo. Or always coming to the 5pm Christmas Eve service /Or always coming to the 7pm Christmas Eve service. Or opening presents on Christmas Eve after worship. Or opening presents on Christmas Day. Or needing to have certain foods on the Christmas dinner table for it to feel like a real Christmas dinner. Turkey or Hickory Ham or home cooked stuffing or stove-top stuffing.

There are times in the church calendar year where I could really change things up, and people would be okay with it. And then if I went and decided that this year, we were not going to sing silent night to candle light or end our service with joy to the world I might get some serious push back from people.

We hold tight to our Christmas traditions (**Image One**), and when challenged to do things differently, we can find it hard to deal with. I think about when we entered into a relationship with our significant other, and spent that first Christmas together. We realized very quickly how important each of our Christmas traditions were. As well as how different they were. More than likely, we got into some pretty heated arguments over which tradition to follow. There is a lot of compromising that happens between couples before they get to set a tradition of their own that they can carry forward to their children. So that they can fight it over with their significant others years down the road.

Or remember that first Christmas when your adult child spent Christmas with their significant other's family instead of with your family. Remember how you felt when you didn't see your child at the dinner table.

Or remember the story of Rudolph (**Image One**), where a Christmas blizzard almost prevents Santa from delivering toys. And so, Santa has to rely on a reindeer that is an outcast for having a red shiny nose to guide Santa's sleigh. I can't imagine what the other reindeer were thinking when Santa approached Rudolph with this invitation. And talk about challenging our nostalgia at that time. The story of Rudolph changed how the very story of Santa was told to future generations.

Sometimes we are invited into, or thrown into a new adventure during the Christmas season (**Image Two:** Joseph and Mary travelling to Bethlehem). Sometimes this new adventure

can be hard for us to deal with. Sometimes this new adventure comes with uncertainty. Sometimes this new adventure really challenges our feelings of nostalgia.

Well, in the Christmas story we hear this evening, Mary and Joseph are invited to go on a new adventure. They are invited to become parents of the saviour, the messiah, the one who will invite the whole world on a new adventure. And of course, like most of our new adventures, this adventure, comes with a lot of uncertainty. Especially as they try and make their way through the wilderness from Nazareth to Bethlehem (**Image Two**). This new adventure challenges their feelings of nostalgia. Of what they used to know. This new adventure challenges the very story of God that they have been taught from their ancestors, from their religious leaders to believe. I wouldn't be surprised if Mary and Joseph are really struggling with these changes.

For the shepherds, they too, are invited on a new adventure (**Image Two**). They are invited to leave their sheep behind and bear witness to the saviour, the messiah. This journey too comes with a lot of uncertainty. As they need to trust that as they leave the sheep behind, that the sheep are going to be okay. That the angels that sent them forth will watch over the sheep while they are away. I wouldn't be surprised if the Shepherds are struggling somewhat with this invitation. Though they do go in haste.

The Christmas story is a story where God's people are being sent on a new adventure (**Image Two**). And yes. Sometimes the road gets rough. Sometimes a Christmas blizzard pops up (**Image One**). Sometimes the uncertainty is hard to bear. But eventually, they find themselves at the manger, bearing witness to the baby Jesus. The Son of God, the saviour, the Messiah. Who reveals to them and the world God's grace and love.

Likewise, our Christmas story can sometimes be a story about us being sent on a new adventure (**Image Two**). As we deal with changes in our lives that challenge us to see the traditions, we hold true to, in new ways. Sometimes this road will be rough, this Christmas blizzard will hit us hard. The uncertainty will be too much to bear. But like, the shepherds, Mary and Joseph, Rudolph, the other Reindeer, Santa, we too find ourselves being guided through the storm. We too find ourselves standing at the manger, bearing witness to the Son of God, the Saviour, the Messiah, the presence of the Christ child. We too experience God's grace and love.

Let us pray, gracious God, as you send us on new adventures during the Christmas season, as you send us on new adventures in our everyday lives, grant us peace when our feelings of anxiety from dealing with the uncertainty gets the best of us. Guide us with your light through the blizzards that pop up. And help us bear witness to your Christmas joy, your grace and love, that we experience in the baby Jesus. **Amen.**