

December 25, 2005

Patchogue Church of the Nazarene

“Christmas ‘Time’” (Based on a message from Rick Warren)

Luke 2:10-14

It’s Christmas! Don’t you just love Christmas time? Of course Christmas time is really great for kids. I remember that as a kid I’d rarely get much sleep on Christmas Eve. Filled with anticipation over the gifts under the tree, I would repeatedly wake up my parents and ask “*Is it time yet?*” And they would say, “No, go back to sleep.” It usually wasn’t time until dad got the last part into whatever gift had to be assembled that year. One year we were at my grandmother’s house. My cousin and I got up really early. It was still dark. We crawled on our stomachs from the bedroom to the living room, trying not to wake anyone else. When we saw all the gifts I said, “Wow, I got the train set I wanted.” And my cousin, Tommy said, “yeah, and I got the football I wanted.” Well, our parents heard us and figured it was time to get up and straighten us out, because you see, the train set was Tommy’s and the football was mine.

Christmas is a wonderful time. People in a giving mood, it is a time of love and joy. It is a perfect time of year.

The first Christmas was perfectly timed by God, happening just when He wanted it. Galatians 4:4 says, “***When the right time came, God sent His son.***”

What time is Christmas this year? We find the answer in four statements the angel said to the shepherds at the first Christmas (Luke 2:10-14 NKJV):

Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. 11 For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.”

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:

14 “Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”

Luke 2:10-14 NCV (New Century Version)

The angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I am bringing you good news that will be a great joy to all the people. 11 Today your Savior was born in the town of David. He is Christ, the Lord. 12 This is how you will know him: You will find a baby wrapped in pieces of cloth and lying in a feeding box.”

13 Then a very large group of angels from heaven joined the first angel, praising God and saying:

14 “Give glory to God in heaven,
and on earth let there be peace among the people who please God.”

It’s Christmas “Time”...

1. It's time to release your fears!

The first thing the angel said was, "*Do not be afraid!*" Fear is a self-imposed prison that keeps you from living the life God intends for you. Fear is your greatest barrier to knowing God and fulfilling His purposes for your life. Fears make us unsettled, insecure, doubting our self-worth. Fears causes health problems, and sleep problems.

Now, fear can be good if it teaches us and builds in us a courageous character. And fear is good if it teaches us to rely on and trust in God. But fear is not good if it keeps us from doing the things we ought to do. We are not meant to live in fear. So whatever you are afraid of - Christmas is the time to let it go.

The Bible contains 365 "*Fear nots*" - one for every day of the year! It's time to stop worrying and start worshipping. Stop tensing up and start trusting God. God promises to comfort us in our fear if we seek Him when we are afraid, and we have the confident assurance that He is with us in any circumstance. (Ps 46:1-2a) "God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble. So we will not fear..."

And Jesus promised (John 14:27) "I am leaving you with a gift--peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give isn't like the peace the world gives. So don't be troubled or afraid.

Christmas time teach us, as the angels said, "do not be afraid!"

2. It's time to renew your faith! Next, the angel said "*I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.*" or "*I bring you good news with great joy, and it is for everyone!*" The Good News of Christmas time is the news of Jesus. The news of Jesus keeps getting better because the bad news of the world keeps getting worse and worse.

People are willing to kill themselves and innocent people because of their fanatic beliefs and hatred. We are accepting and celebrating same sex marriages. The ACLU fought against teaching "Intelligent Design" in the schools as a scientific theory along with Darwin's theory, they fought to not allow Nativity scenes on government property and they fight for organizations who believe it is ok to have sex with children. The fastest growing industry is slavery, especially of young girls held against their will for sex. The world has gone mad, or more accurately the world is becoming more and more immoral.

People are angry, empty, lonely and hopeless. They seek gratification from the greed for money, the numbing of drugs, alcohol and sexual promiscuity or hard work, music, sports or in seeking success. None of these things satisfy the hunger deep inside of every human being. Even in our closest human relationships we remain feeling unloved and unimportant.

The Good News is that God loves you, He created you for a purpose, you can know God personally by trusting in Jesus, and He wants you to spend eternity with Him. God has *really* long range plans for your life! Christmas is time to come back to God.

3. It's time to receive forgiveness! Next the angel said, "*There is born to you this day... a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.*" This is what we are celebrating, "*Today a Savior has been born for you; He is Christ the Lord!*"

If our greatest need was education, God would have sent a teacher. If our greatest need was health, he would have sent a doctor. If our greatest need was financial, he would have sent a financial advisor. But our greatest need is forgiveness, so God sent a Savior. It doesn't matter what wrong you've done, Jesus paid for it on the cross. Accept his forgiveness. A Savior came for you and for all people. The greatest gift you can give anyone is to introduce them to Jesus and God's purpose for their lives. So many people have much to live *on*, but little to live *for*.

4. It's time to rebuild relationships! Finally the angel said, "*Peace on earth, and goodwill to all people.*" Once you've accepted God's forgiveness, He wants you to forgive everyone else. Who do you need to offer forgiveness to this Christmas? *It's time to make peace!*

Christmas "time" a time to
Release your fears
Renew your faith
Receive forgiveness
Rebuild relationships