

“I Wonder, Why?”
Christmas Eve at Knox, 2007
Pastor Lyle L. Wahl

Introduction

Christmas without question is the holiday of holidays when it comes to time, planning and celebration. All other holidays pale in comparison. The bright lights, beautiful decorations, warmth of time with family and friends, special celebrations and memories. *Christmas.*

We know many people focus on the scenes, gifts and myths rather than the reality of Christmas. This morning’s newspaper had an article titled “*No Consensus on Christmas.*” The article cited the results of an Ipsos Reid poll of Canadians. One of their findings was that only 23% of those polled said that Christmas is best expressed as “a time to remember the birth of Jesus Christ.”

At the same time, many people find that, try as they might to romanticize Jesus as just the cute little baby in the manger, or even squeeze Him out of Christmas, it is not easily done. Somehow Christmas reaches out and grabs the mind and heart.

You may have read the story. Earlier this month Justice Marion Cohen ordered a Christmas tree at the Ontario Court of Justice be relocated to a back hallway behind frosted glass doors. Ontario premier Dalton McGuinty and religious leaders from several faiths, in the words of one news account, *went out on a limb to defend that Christmas tree.* Tarek Fatah, founder of the Muslim Canadian Congress said, “It’s so stupid. I’m at a loss for words. Christmas is celebrated by Muslims in many countries—they should ban political correctness, not Christmas trees.” His group issued a news release calling on Muslims “to celebrate Christmas ... and light up Christmas trees to send a message to the Ontario judge that she is wrong on all counts.”

That leads us to the question “*Why?*” Why all the interest and concern? Then, what about the events of the original Christmas? Again, we ask,

- Why did that star appear?
- Why did God send angels to speak and sing?
- Why did the shepherds leave their flocks in the night and rush to Bethlehem?
- Why are we drawn to the Christmas story?
- What’s behind it all?
- “I Wonder, *Why?*”

Think with me about a few familiar aspects of this 2,000 year-ago event. You can follow along with what I’ve written on the back page of your program.

I Wonder, *Why?*

Let's begin with a few familiar features of the Christmas story.

A star in the sky,
shining with a special light,
moving onward,
hovering over a stable,
I wonder, *Why?*

The *star*, that special light. Most of us have some kind of picture of it in our mind. Many people have a picture of the silhouettes of three men on camels with this enormous, bright star out ahead of them. But, *what was it? Why the star?* Many natural explanations have been offered to try to explain it.

Let's look at a few facts from the Bible. First, the word *star* in the gospel record was used to refer to constellations, meteors and comets. The light appeared to the magi in their own land, east of Palestine. It sent them searching. By reading the Hebrew Scriptures they were led to believe it was the sign that a new and great king of the Jews had been born.

God provided that special *star, that light*, in a way we don't know. But it certainly got the magi's attention. It led them to seek and find Jesus, to give Him costly presents, to worship Him, the new-born King.

But, we can still ask, "I wonder, *Why?*" "Why this light, why to these foreign, gentile leaders?" In part, it was to fulfill God's promises, to bring the news of God the Son's birth to many others beyond Israel. It was God reaching out, calling these gentiles to acknowledge and worship the true, eternal King and Savior. *And then ...*

Shepherds from the countryside
rushing away from their flocks, *at night!*
searching and seeking,
kneeling and worshipping.
I wonder, *why?*

Pastor Tyler led us in a look at the shepherds two weeks ago. They were hard working, practical men; survivors. They were from the lower classes and tended to be coarse and crude. Because of being isolated out with the sheep for so long, people tended to *turn up their noses* at the smell of these men when they came to town; and also to *look down their noses* at these social and religious outcasts.

Yet this hard-working, canny group of survivors was visited by angels announcing, "*The Savior is born!*" They left their sheep at night, and went to town to find Jesus. These self-sufficient, proud, crusty men knelt before Jesus, and worshiped Him. Then they rushed about the crowded town telling everyone, "*The Messiah has come! He has been born right here, tonight!*"

Now, *why*, “I wonder, why did God’s angels announce Christ’s birth to these hardened misfits? Why *did* they rush to Bethlehem?” God brought the news of Christ to all, including the lowly and despised. God reached out to these shepherds, and their hearts responded to search and worship, to be a part of the first ones to welcome *their* long-awaited Savior.

My interest in this long ago, far away event,
drawn to come and look into the manger,
filled with warmth and joy,
moved to love Him,
I wonder, *why*?

Yes, the interest and search goes on, even among those who don’t understand. Why are we drawn to the manger, moved with warm feelings and love?

It is because God is still announcing, “Jesus, *your* Savior has come!” God is still reaching out, touching our hearts, calling us to come and see, to know the truth, to feel the warmth of His love; He is still reaching out calling us to acknowledge, receive and worship Jesus, God the Son, the King over all, the one and only Savior.

I Wonder, *Why*?

Jesus is ...

Emmanuel, God with us, *with me*?
The baby in the manger became the Savior of the cross,
And wonder of wonders, He loves *me*!
I wonder, why?

Luke 1:23 tells us Jesus was to be called Emmanuel, which literally means, *God with us*. Jesus Christ is God with us. But *why*?

We don’t have to scratch deeply to see the reality of serious problems, flaws and evils in our world, and within ourselves. It is part of *our* nature, not just our society. Each one of us come by it honestly— inheriting it from our first parents, Adam and Eve. They thought they knew better than God, disobeyed Him, and left to all of us a character alienated from God, His love, and truth.

We can’t change that on our own. It is in our spiritual DNA. Not that we haven’t tried all sorts of logical and bizarre things to change it. Only God can change us. So, He sent God the Son, born of the virgin Mary. Jesus, the only perfect one, went to the cross where all of my sin, all of your sin, all of the world’s sin was placed on Him. By His death and resurrection He broke the stranglehold of sin and death. He now offers all of us forgiveness and life forever with God as *we* see, acknowledge, accept and worship Him as our Savior.

“God with us, *with me*? *Why*?” The most familiar verse in the Bible tells us “... God so *loved the world*, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16). There it is: “... God *so loved the world*.” He

loved the gentile magi; He loved those outcast and downcast shepherds; *and*, He loves you and me. Yes, wonder of wonders, whoever you are, whatever you have done, whatever you think of yourself, whatever others think of you, *Jesus loves you!*

In love, Jesus is reaching out to you, calling you on this Christmas Eve. A man picked up the phone, punched in a number and realized he had made a mistake, but let it ring. A gruff voice answered, “You’ve got the wrong number!” *Click*. The caller was startled, and then became curious. He called that *wrong* number again. This time, “I said you got the wrong number!” *Click*. The man called a third time. “Hey, c’mon, is this you again?” Quickly, before the *Click*, “Yes, it’s me. I was wondering how you knew I had the wrong number before I even said anything.” “You figure it out.” *Click*. This was repeated several more times. Finally he learned the man on the other end was old, had no family and friends, so to him, every call *had to be* a wrong number. Because the caller persisted, they eventually stuck up a friendship.

Throughout your life, when you haven’t known or cared, when you *have* wondered “*Why?*”, Jesus has been calling you, time after time. He is telling you, “I love you!” “I came to this world as the baby in the manger to be the Savior of the cross, *your* Savior.” “I am reaching out to you. I am the only one who can answer all of the *why* and other questions you have. Make room for me in your heart.”

Conclusion

Yes, the true Christmas reaches out and grabs our minds and hearts. Have you really seen and heard, accepted Jesus? Do you really know Him, His love, forgiveness and life? If so, give thanks and celebrate tonight! He left His throne in heaven to come to earth for *you*.

If not, realize there is no other way to be what you were designed to be other than Jesus. Three year-old Tommy was singing Christmas carols with his family. One of his favorites was *Away In A Manger*. He sang it over and over. But he didn’t get the words quite right. He kept singing, “*The way in a manger.*” Well, the words weren’t correct, but the meaning was. *The way in a manger. The way in Jesus.* Jesus has told us, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me” (John 14:6).

Answer his call this evening. I, along with others here, would be happy to talk with you tonight. After the service tell me, or someone you know who knows Jesus, that you want to talk.

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