

## **Nativity Sermon, Cashmere Presbyterian Church 10 Dec 2017 Silvia Purdie**

Goodness me, but we know this story so well, don't we? It's hard to hear, to absorb, because we take it for granted.

We already know that Love came down at Christmas, that God entered into our world as a little baby, 2,000 years ago. We take for granted that God loves us, and wants to be close to us and participate in human life. We know that God has a personal interest in each one of these gorgeous little people who have shared our service this morning, and each one of the children in each and every country in the world. We believe that God really really cares about us, about all of us.

And this story is the basis for that. The Christian story and the Christian claim is that the maker of the universe got frustrated with trying to communicate with people from heaven, and decided that the only way to get through to us was to join us, to actually enter into human life, to reach us from the inside.

That is the first big idea about Christmas: that God decided to come to earth.

That in itself is not that radical. Lots of cultures have myths about gods coming to earth and mixing with humans. Even our secular god of Christmas, Santa, does that, and you can even get your photo taken with him – for a price!

The second big idea is much more radical. In our nativity drama today even the Angel Gabriel had trouble with this, because he wanted God's coming to earth to be in the most important way, in the most public way, to have the most impact possible. But God chose to come to earth in an ordinary way, a hidden way, a humble way, through a little baby born in a little town, in a stable with animals, witnessed by shepherds who were the lowest of the low. This curious, mysterious, wonderful story has been treasured by people through the centuries and we retell it this morning, because it connects us to a God who chooses you and chooses me, here and now, just as he chose Mary and Joseph and shepherds 2000 years ago.

This story, told here by our Nativity, draws us deeper into faith, for here at the manger it seems so simple, so obvious, that God came to us in love and simple humility, so that we might come to Christ in love and simple humility.

And we treasure our children because they show us how to come in love and simple humility, in awe before God who is revealed in the little things.

Christmas really is not about the tinsel. Our eyes are drawn to shiny sparkly things, but our hearts are drawn to simple expressions of love.

Christmas really is about gratitude. But before we can say 'thank you' we have to notice. And we can't notice the gifts that God is giving us if we take them for granted. And the more busy we are rushing around and the more crowded our lives are with stuff and wrapping paper the harder it is to notice the gifts we are already given.

So this is my challenge to you this Christmas. Notice what you take for granted. And say thank you. Notice the little acts of kindness that people around you do for you, a bit of rubbish picked up off the floor, or a cup of tea. Notice the people who serve you, even if they are getting paid, a girl at the supermarket checkout, or the man driving the rubbish truck. Say thank you. How about giving a some Christmas goodies to the road work team, or the homeless guy at the shops, or some folks in the dementia unit? Who are the forgotten, taken for granted people? God, give us eyes to see and ears to hear the countless ways in which you are with us, in the ordinary places and the ordinary people, through the forgotten people and taken-for-granted people.

Love came down at Christmas, love all lovely, love divine  
Love was born at Christmas, star and angels give the sign.