**“Announcing God’s Presence”**

Luke 2:1-20

Christmas Eve

“And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them. And the angel said to them, ‘Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.’”

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

**Bridge**

**Signs** have always been offered of **God’s presence among His people (so that we can know where He is for us**. To Ahaz (recorded in Isaiah), he was told that a “**virgin** **shall** conceive” and He would be Immanuel (as in, God is there with us). That “**virgin**” **did** conceive. And an angel said to Joseph that his betrothed, **Mary, is that “virgin” then pregnant**. **Bethlehem** will be the town of His birth, **of Judah and David’s lineage**, **through a genealogy well documented**. **A star** would lead foreign wise men to the boy. Scripture even led the wisest of Herod’s seers to the time and location.

And, then, there were **angels**. **Messages calling out signs** **(signs themselves)** got **spoken by them** to people who “needed to know” and then **tell us** who “need to know”. Zechariah and Mary and Joseph and shepherds then were **shown** the progress in pregnancies and a baby to be **found exactly where those told were sent**. Elizabeth got the sign of a **leaping baby John within her womb** as this baby in the womb noted **the Messiah in a womb next to him**.

And **shepherds were told to go and see**. “You will **find as a sign for you**. He is wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger … right here in the City of David” …

**Text**

… so “’let us go over to Bethlehem and **see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us**.’ And **they went with haste** and **found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger**. And **when they saw it, they made known the saying that have been told them concerning this child**. And **all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them**. **Mary** **treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart**. **The shepherds** **returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them**.”

“**Published** peace; good news of happiness, **published** salvation” it’s called in Isaiah writing. “Eye to eye **sees**”, “comfort is **upon people**, Jerusalem **is redeemed**, the Lord has **bared** His Holy Arm **before the eyes of all the nations**” (His own Son bared to the world in the incarnation of birth), “all the ends of the earth **seeing** the Salvation of God”.

And, then, there is that Baby grown to provide the sacrifice of His own bloodshed for sin: Him “appointed the Heir of all things, through Whom also He created the world. He the Radiance of the Glory of God and the Exact Imprint of His Nature, Him upholding the universe by the Word of His Power. After making purification for sins (that Good News of Peace with God), He (Jesus / the Baby of Christmas) sat down, finally (after resurrection from His death) siting at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become (through His full obedience as a ‘made Man’) as much superior to angels as the Name He has inherited is more excellent than theirs”.

**Application**

Last night, I spoke of the angelic announcement of that “peace with God” which is, only, secondarily a peace between man and man (more, first and foremost, and the source of any “peace” any which way) “peace” between man **AND GOD**. And **you all**, this morning, know of it in a baptism gracious in its attachment to the Christmas baby and His work upon this planet for 33 years. **Living tempted in every way as we are** yet **doing signs and wonders** **demonstrating always** that He was the Father’s Son and sacrifice to die (born for it) for the sins of the world.

**You’re** **Jews** here rather than Gentiles **in the Biblical sense**, **baptized into covenant (having that sign placed upon and into you)**, here gathered for not just the **Word affirmation of the incarnation of God for man**, but also to enjoy it in the family of the Church, hungry to receive the **fruit of it all in the Meal that we’ve got set for us to eat and drink of as sign and nourishment**. **You’re seers of signs**, and cherish them all (God in Christ **continuing to give evidence to Himself**: His birth through resurrection onto a reign then, committed-to, un-veiled return to usher in the rest of a glorious eternity).

And **you know Him** as God’s Word from before all time being made flesh, celebrated at Christmas (and so many other times / every gathering here as we profess that Baby as “God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God”). **You have seen (and regularly do)** His glory, “glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth”.

It may be that we **forget, sometimes**, to **look for** God’s promised and delivered presence. It’s for those **lapses of forgetfulness** that we begin as we did today, confessing to **see, anew**, the **sign of forgiveness spoken to you upon your confession:** “Dear Christian friends, take heart! The darkness of your sins **will never be able to overcome the light of God’s love for you in Christ Jesus**. As a **called and ordained servant of Christ**, and **by His authority**, I therefore f**orgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the +Son and of the Holy Spirit**. The One who dwelt among us, full of grace and truth, **CAME TO** forgive sinners and to **set us free to BE children of His Father**. **The light of Jesus’ forgiveness shines on you today!**” That’s a promise and the ultimate benefit remembered this day.

 For this reason, **a** **BLESSED Christmas Day and beyond for you** … **in the name of the Christ-child, Jesus**. Amen.