

Christmas Eve 2016  
Matthew 1:18-25

**SHE WILL BEAR A SON, AND YOU SHALL CALL HIS NAME JESUS, FOR HE WILL SAVE HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS.**

Do you ever wonder “why”? Why your parents named you what they did? You do have to wonder, don’t you, why parents would name their son after a beer mug in the shape of a stout man, smoking a pipe, wearing a 3-cornered hat. You all have these puzzled, confused looks on your faces, so I should tell you that’s what a “toby” is, a beer mug, that you actually give as a gift to you best mate, so you can drink a “toby” with him.

Isaiah writes, “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given.” When Mary gave birth to that child, she wrapped her Son in swaddling cloths, laid Him in a manger, and named Him “Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” “Jesus” means “Savior, Deliverer.” And, it takes us back to the time of Moses.

The children of Israel were enslaved in Egypt, the land of death. The bitter yoke of their Egyptian masters was heavy upon them, and they cried out to God for deliverance. So, He sent them a Deliverer, Moses, who led them with unmoistened foot through the Promised Land, the land flowing with milk and honey, the land of life.

The land of death. When God had ceased from His work of creating, He pronounced His creation “good,” that meant there was no sin. But, our first parents rebelled against God and enslaved us to sin. The bitter yoke of sin and its curse and its wages of death are heavy upon us, and there is nothing we can do to free ourselves.

Think of it this way: You come into this world having inherited certain things. We are not talking about Mom’s eyes, Dad’s hairline, we are talking

about sin. You come into this world having inherited sin. David speaks for all of us, "I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps 51). That's all because Adam and Eve sinned against God in the Garden. Because Adam sinned, that sin is passed down to each and every one of us.

Wow, that's kind of a downer, huh? Nobody likes to hear that. Nobody likes to be told they are bad and that they do bad things, especially on Christmas. That, My Dear Friends in Christ, is because you are a natural person. And St. Paul tells us, "The **natural person** does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor 2:14)

After all, what is the popular notion at Christmas? Who gets presents for Christmas? Nice kids. I'm guessing there is a present, or even two, under the tree with your name, so, see, see, if you are getting a present for Christmas, you must be nice. You must be a good person. At the very least, you're better than everybody else, right?

That is the notion of the natural person. We deny our sin. And especially, God's wrath and judgment against it.

But you, natural people, who do not want to hear of sin, consider this: Have you listened to the news or read a newspaper lately? What did you hear? Bad stuff. There is no lack of sin and trouble in this world.

If that alone does not convince you, do this: take your hand, place it inside your shirt, and you know what you will feel? Flesh and blood and bone. And, you are reminded that your heart will beat its last and you will take your final breath and return to the dust from which you came. St. Paul teaches us this, "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all

sinned” (Ro 5). You will die because you are a sinner. And if you die in unbelief and unrepentance, you will inherit hell for all eternity.

But, tonight we celebrate the joy of Christmas. Why is this child born, why is this Son given this night? The GOOD NEWS of Christmas is that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. That’s why He is born this night. He’s here to save you, to deliver you from sin, death, and the devil.

And, here’s how He does it: Jesus is true God, very God of very God, and He comes down from heaven conceived by the Holy Spirit, takes on human flesh and blood, and is born of the Virgin Mary. He comes as a little baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and laid in a manger. He is born exactly like you, so that He can be your substitute.

He is born exactly like you in every way but one, He is without sin. This little baby Jesus grows up and lives His life, and He lives it for you. He doesn’t just live the good life, He lives a perfect life. Never once did He sin against God. Never once did He sin against His neighbor. He does it all for you, as your substitute, in your place, to fulfill the demands of the Law, so His righteousness can be your righteousness.

And, He takes all your sin from you. In fact, He takes the sin of the whole world upon Himself, the sin of every sinner. Jesus takes all that upon Himself and then suffers all that you deserve for your sins. A friend betrays Him into the hands of those who want Him dead. His other friends abandon Him and leave Him to face His darkest hour alone. He has to stand trial before the Jewish authorities who try and convict Him of the charge of blasphemy and sentence Him to death. Because they cannot carry out that sentence of death, so they send Him to the Romans who

charge Him with insurrection. He is tried and He is convicted and sentenced to death, death upon a cross.

Then, for you and for your salvation, He is beaten, He is slapped, He is stripped naked, He is flogged, He is crowned with thorns, He is marched out to the place of the skull called Golgotha, and there nailed to the cross. See, in Jesus, what you deserve for your sins. See also, in Jesus, the love of God for you, for there is Jesus taking your punishment for you in your place, and He is condemned by God to death, and He dies upon that cross for you, for your sins.

But three days later, He rises again from the dead to bring to you the gifts of His perfect life, death, His resurrection. He delivers you from all your sins, for by His perfect life, His death, by His resurrection, He forgives you all your sins. And, He has taken the death that you should die and changed that into life, eternal life with Him forever. He has taken that damnation that was set upon because of your sins and changed that into eternal life. He has taken your place in hell and given to you a place at His wedding feast in heaven that has no end. In Christ, God gives you all His love, His grace, and every blessing He has.

And what sweet comfort this gives as we live under the burden of sin this day. Last Sunday, after the Christmas program, each of the kids received a Christmas bag, with various items including a CANDY CANE. Attached to that candy cane was the story of the candy cane, which ended with these words,

Now each time you see the striped candy cane,  
Remember, dear child, He knows your name.

Jesus knows your name. And now, we, the sheep of the Good Shepherd's flock, hear His voice. He calls us by name and leads us

through the darkness of the valley of the shadow of death. Rejoice and be glad, your name is written in the Lamb's book of life.