

Calvary United Methodist Church
December 30, 2018

LESSONS AND CAROLS

Rev. Dr. A. Robert Cook

Children's Message:

I'll ask that our kids come forward and we'll share in a time with the kids. Well, good morning. Good to see you. Lovely red dress. I like it. Did you have a nice Christmas? (Yeah.) Did you get everything you wanted? (Yeah, I got the...) What is it? (Child speaks.) Really? (It's so plushy.) Plushy? Ah. Did you get everything you wanted? (Not everything exactly. I got a toy, laser tag...) Laser tag. What did you want? (A custom Eagles jersey.) Did you get one? Alright! An Eagles jersey. They are not in Pittsburgh, are they? Okay, just checking.

So, it's the fifth day of Christmas. You know how many days of Christmas there are, right? (Twelve.) Right. So today is the fifth. So people are still saying Merry Christmas, right? Or do you think it is past, it's all over? (Not over.) Not over. Actually I had a neighbor when we lived in the Hegins Valley many years ago. Her tree was up, it was like an umbrella, she just popped it up and everything came out, it was all there, like Mary Poppins. And that was on Thanksgiving Day. And Christmas afternoon it was gone, everything was...like, what happened? I never knew anyone to do it that quick. And she was done with it and then the Valentine's decorations would come out. I thought it was kind of pushing it a little bit, but I still like saying Merry Christmas and people are still getting Christmas cards and Christmas emails and still visiting, so...

Now, did you ever wonder about the first Christmas? What they said? What do you think they said? They wouldn't have known it's Christmas, would they? No, they wouldn't have. But the very first people to find out about the birth of Jesus, do you know who they were? (Mary and Joseph.) Well, Mary would have definitely been the first, absolutely that is the correct answer. (Wait, wouldn't God know about it first?) Yes, I think God was in on it, yeah, I think. Well, the angel appeared over the fields of Bethlehem and (The shepherds.) The shepherds, that's right. And they said, "Fear not, for unto you this day in the city of David has been born a king who is the Christ and you may find him lying in a manger wrapped in swaddling clothes." That's the old King James way to say it. And so they said right away, "Let's go. Let's go see this thing which the Lord has told us about." So the shepherds were actually the first people there and then they were the ones who went forth after they saw that baby and they were the first preachers. Do you want to be a preacher? It's a weird job, but it's good. It's really good, but it is a little weird.

They were not used to speaking in public because no one really paid attention to shepherds. They smelled like sheep and goats. Have you ever smelled a sheep or a goat? (Nope, I've eaten lamb though.) You've eaten lamb. It almost counts. Well, go see Jay Grubb. He's in back there and he's got goats. He'll tell you how they smell. Just get real close to him. They didn't

have any education, they didn't really know how to read or write, although they may have gone to Hebrew school and done their Bar Mitzvah, that's true. But when God sent the angel to the shepherds, they were the very first to go and tell the Good News. Now, they probably didn't say, "Merry Christmas." But they probably said, "A king has been born and he is lying in a manger in a little barn." And they went out there and said, "We heard angels and this was just amazing." And so the shepherds were really the first preachers.

Now, you don't have to be a preacher but you can be an honorary shepherd and still tell the Good News, right? You can shout out to the world just the way the shepherds did 2000 years ago. So, do you want to be a shouting shepherd? You don't want to be a shouting shepherd? Boy, this blows the whole kid's sermon. (I do.) You do, okay. So we have to do this together. We have to say, "Merry Christmas, Jesus is born." And say it really loud. (Okay.) Ok? Ready? One, two, three. MERRY CHRISTMAS! JESUS IS BORN." You guys are all called. No problem.

Now, let me ask you, you know I got this from Susie Shepler this week. It is a little nativity scene, has a little donkey, has Mary and Joseph and their baby lying in the little manger. Where does Jesus live now? He's not in a manger of straw. (It's hay. He's in a manger or basket filled with hay.) Well, that's where he was, but where is he now? (Heaven, he's in heaven.) He might even be closer than that. (Cloth?) Well, he could be in Philadelphia, since you got an Eagles jersey. (In your heart.) He's in your heart. You are definitely called. Ok. He's in your heart and you can feel him. He's closer than the beating of your heart. And he speaks to you. Do you know what he says to you? "I love you, a lot. You are just perfect the way you are. I made you." This is pretty cool.

Okay, so let's pray: Thank you, Lord, for Christmas, that it continues, but Christmas can be in our heart for a long, long time until it comes around next year and after that and after that. Thanks for our kids. I'm glad they are having a good Christmas season and that Christ is born in them. Amen.

Ok. Come on in. Don't be shy.