

Arvada United Methodist Church
Christmas Eve Service
Born In A Barn – Rev. Rusty Butler
Luke 2:7-20

There is a cartoon, I saw recently, Joseph has just walked into his carpenter shop and he sees the mess that the 8 or 9 year old Jesus has made. The door is wide open and, Joseph is frustrated and there he is standing over Jesus with his hands on his hips Joseph says, “Jesus, were you born in a bar...? Oh forget it.”

There’s something about that phrase. Born in a barn...Everyone who’s grown up and ever forgot to shut the door or left the screen door open has probably heard that phrase, at least once or twice, “Were you born in a barn?!”

I never understood exactly what was meant. I mean, I kept thinking about the barn. I suppose if you leave a barn door open, who knows what might come in or what might get out.

In the movie, Prairie Home Companion, Garrison Keillor is always being told by his assistant, right before he goes on stage to, “Check his barndoor.” It meant of course, he better check to see if his zipper is down. I thought that was the funniest part of the movie.

At any rate, here we are, gathered tonight, to celebrate the one who was Born In a Barn.

The Christmas Carol writers through the centuries kept coming back to this fact. They point us to the incredible nature of this story. Again and again they tell about it.

Away in a Manger

Away in a manger no crib for a bed, the little lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.

The cattle are lowing the baby awakes, but little Lord Jesus no crying he makes.

What Child is This

Why lies he in such mean estate where ox and ass are feeding?

In the Bleak Midwinter

In the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed the Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.

Good Christian Friends, Rejoice

Good Christian Friends Rejoice with heart and soul and voice give ye heed to what we say News' News Jesus Christ is born today Ox and ass before him bow, and he is in the manger now.

The Friendly Beasts...one of my favorite songs

"I" said the cow all white and red, I gave him my manger for his bed, I gave him hay to pillow his head, I said the cow, all white and red.

Infant Holy, Infant Lowly

Infant holy, infant lowly, for his bed a cattle stall, oxen lowing little knowing Christ the babe is Lord of all.

O Come All Ye Faithful 5th verse...

Child for us sinners poor and in the manger we would embrace thee with love and awe. Who would not love thee, loving us so dearly.

Sing We now of Christmas

In Bethlehem they found him, Joseph and Mary mild seated by the manger watching the holy child.

The song writers were captured by that piece of the story. They got it from Luke of course.

In the Gospel of Luke, the writer mentions Jesus lying in a manger three times. The first time it is just Mary and Joseph who are there, Mary laid him in a manger. The second time the angels are talking to the shepherds telling them they will find Jesus lying in a manger. And the third time, Luke uses the word a third time, The shepherds go and find him lying in a manger. Whenever a gospel writer uses an unusual word three times...this is what my seminary professors told me at least, is you better stop and pay attention!

Now why do you think the story was written that way?

Can I suggest to you this? I think it was written in just that way, because Luke wanted to contrast the humble, modest, unassuming beginnings of Jesus with the privileged, exalted, arrogant beginnings of the rulers from Rome.

And the people got it. So down through the years, that humble beginning was woven into the stories and the songs of Christmas.

To find the Messiah, God's anointed one, in those lowly circumstances was as amazing then as it would be now. Would we believe it if we were led to a newborn Savior in a homeless shelter or a truck stop? But here it is, in Luke's story: the one who was to become known as Savior, God among us, comes to us in the most ordinary way.

Valerie and I have a couple of friends who are pastors. Tonight after their multiple services are done, sometime after midnight, they will go to a little bar downtown where they will have a Communion Service. They will share the bread and maybe a little wine with people whose lives are pretty ordinary but whose paths don't much take them by the church anymore. They tell us, that there in that bar, it becomes a holy place for a few minutes early on Christmas morning as ordinary people are reminded of an extraordinary story and who are told that they too are a part of the ongoing story.

I hope that in the ordinary circumstances and places of our lives, tonight or tomorrow or in the days to come that we too might find the holiness that is here. That the light that shines from the humble beginnings in some barn in Bethlehem will make its way into our lives. I pray it is so for you and me. Amen.