



Christmas Eve Meditation

Luke 2:1-20

December 24, 2005

HAVE YOU EVER NOTICED THE GREAT CONTRASTS IN THIS ACCOUNT?

For example: a *glorious* angel of the Lord appear to *grungy* shepherds in the fields.

Glory and grunge live side by side in the Christmas story.

Another contrast: the shepherds are confronted by a heavenly host, an army of God that fills sky with booming shouts of “glory to God,” and then the heavenly army is gone, and the shepherds are left alone in silence

Another contrast: the shepherds rush madly toward Bethlehem, but when they get there, their rushing turns to silence before a sight of utter peace: a father and mother and child, wrapped up and lying in a manger

And then there is a contrast in reactions to the child: the *shepherds praise and glorify* God, doing their own version of what the heavenly host had done before. But Mary reacts differently, *quietly treasuring all these words and pondering* them in her heart.

BUT THE GREATEST CONTRAST IS THIS: the contrast between Emperor Augustus on his throne sending out decrees to all the world, and this vulnerable baby sleeping in the hay. An emperor on his throne, an infant in a manger.

The amazing thing about this contrast is: peace on earth will come not through this emperor, but through this infant. That is the point of the whole story.

When a new emperor was crowned, imperial heralds would race through the lands proclaiming “good news!” But now good news comes not on a throne, but in a manger. Good news has a whole new meaning. Peace does not come through empires and armies. Peace comes through the Son of God.

It’s been two thousand years, and the world still doesn’t get it. We seek peace through all kinds of ways, through emperors and armies. But all the king’s horses and all the king’s men cannot put this old world back together again. Peace comes through Jesus Christ.

The way we talk, you would think that if only my political party would win, then peace will come. It never happens that way. The way we talk, you would think that if only I could find under the tree what I’ve always wanted, then I will be at peace. It never

happens that way, either. Who among us tomorrow morning will have a great sense of peace from anything we unwrap under the tree?

The only thing we can unwrap that will give us peace is the gift of Jesus Christ. Imagine receiving that gift, the gift of his forgiveness for your past, the gift of his leadership for your future, the gift of his light in your life. Amen.

Our ushers will come now to spread the light of this Christ candle, as the light spreads through this sanctuary, it will be our way of saying: peace comes only through turning to the light of the world, the Son of God, Jesus Christ