

Good Evening. So glad you could make it tonight, as we take a few minutes to pause, center our time, our celebration of Christmas on the true meaning, of Jesus and what He has done.

If you take your bulletin you were given as you came in, and turn it to the back, and read along with me there. I want to call your attention to this song entitled, "A Carrot, A Stick, A String". We are not going to sing the song tonight, but if you would just read along with me for a moment.

**The Horse's hay beneath His head our Lord was born to a manger bed, that all whose wells run dry could drink of His supply. To keep Him warm the Sheep drew near, so grateful for His coming here: You come with news of grace, come to take my place!**

**The Donkey whispered in His ear: Child, in thirty-some-odd years, You'll ride someone who looks like me (untriumphantly).**

**While the Cardinals warbled a joyful song: He'll make right what man made wrong, bringing low the hills, that the valleys might be filled! Then Child, asked the birds, well, aren't they lovely words we sing? The tiny Baby lay there without saying anything.**

**At a distance stood a mangy Goat with a crooked teeth and a matted coat, weary eyes and worn, chipped & twisted horns. Thinking: Maybe I'll make friends some day with the Cows in the pens and the Rambouillet, but for now I'll keep away - I got nothin' smart to say.**

**But there's a sign on the barn in the Cabbagetown: WHEN THE RAIN PICKS UP AND THE SUN GOES DOWN, SINNERS, COME INSIDE! WITH NO MONEY, COME AND BUY. NO CLEVER TALK NOR GIFT TO BRING REQUIRES OUR LOWLY, LOVELY KING. COME YOU EMPTYHANDED, YOU DON'T NEED ANYTHING.**

**And the night was cool and clear as glass with the sneaking Snake in the garden grass, as Deep cried out to Deep, the Disciples fast asleep. And the snake perked up when he heard You ask: if You're willing that this cup might pass we could find our way back home, maybe start a family all our own...but does not the Father guide the Son? Not my will but Yours be done!  
What else here to do?  
What else me but You???**

**And the snake who'd held the world, a stick, a carrot and a string, was crushed beneath the Foot of Your not wanting anything.**

I bring this to your attention tonight, because what this song so beautifully does, is it tells the Christmas story from a slightly different perspective, but it also tells it completely.

If we are honest, the Christmas story as we know it, has become very familiar for most of us. Maybe even too familiar. We can overlook the magnitude, the majesty, or maybe we don't overlook it, but it doesn't quite grip us like it once did. You know the story so well; you have a good idea of how it goes. Unfortunately sometimes, with that comes a detachment, a detachment from the magnitude.

Here is why I want to draw your attention to the lyrics of this song. It's a song that served as our call to worship this past Sunday, and as we look at it from this slightly different perspective, maybe it helps us

to see this setting a fresh. You'll notice as we read it, it's really from the perspective of the animals for the most part.

Which, in and of itself is really a pretty incredible picture.

To keep Him warm the Sheep drew near, so grateful for His coming here: You come with news of grace, come to take my place! You have the donkey whispering in His ear, you have the cardinals, warbling a joyful song 'He'll make right what man made wrong'. The mangy goat standing on the hill, the outcast, just wanting to be included, 'maybe I'll make friends someday with the cows and the hens and the rambouillet- but for now I will keep away, I've got nothing smart to say.'

You get this picture of all of creation, all the way down to the lowliest of animals, are in awe. With bated breath, full of gratefulness, they are drawing near for what He has come to do. Maybe you say, ok, that's kind of cool, but isn't that kind of a stretch? The Bible doesn't say anything about the animals, and certainly not their mind set. After all, animals are not thinking in this way, if you want to get real literal. Little over the top? Maybe.... but maybe not.

In Romans 8, the Apostle Paul says Roman 8:19-22 **For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. <sup>20</sup> For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope<sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup> For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.**

You see what the scriptures say, and what Paul echoes in Romans 8, is that **All of creation** has been marred by sin. All of it. All of it affected by our rebellion against our creator. Again the Bible clearly tells us all the problems of this world can be traced back to man's ignoring God in the world He created. All men have sinned, every one of us. We can see the problems of that sin all around us. We see it in terrorist attacks, in wars, in senseless shootings. We see it on a more personal note in broken homes, broken relationships, unforgiveness, being wounded or hurt by others, in sickness, and in loneliness.

And in all those areas we are longing for rescue, for the setting of rights of all things. Why you see so many people get deeply emotionally invested in elections and politics, as if the right leader can fix all these things, we desperately want to believe they can. **ALL** of creation is longing for rescue. God has always said, since the very first sin entered the world, that He Himself would come and fix it. Kings and government cannot do it. No great leader or mere man, but God Himself, Emmanuel- God is with us, would have to come and do what we could never do for us. So God long promised He would do just that.

On that first Christmas night, we celebrate the culmination of what He promised, that He has finally come. When I see it in that light, with the longings of our hearts as the backdrop, that this is the answer that we have been waiting for, I don't have a problem characterizing **EVEN** the birds singing a joyful song, "he'll make right what man made wrong bringing low the hills that the valleys might be filled." That maybe just maybe all of creation was rejoicing at His arrival.

We do read in Luke 2 that that the heavens couldn't contain their excitement, that God chose to let some shepherds in a nearby field in out what was happening. **<sup>8</sup> And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great**

fear.<sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup>For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup>And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup>And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup>"Glory to God in the highest,  
and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

<sup>15</sup>When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."

This part of the story is so familiar, that you hear that you can gloss right over it. Multitudes in the Heavens praising God saying- HE is HERE!! I hate to admit but it was reading this story in an illustrated Bible with my 5 year this week, and I was overwhelmed by the majesty of this, seeing it afresh, because of one of the drawings. The drawing of the skies filled with the angelic host, praising Him! It had become so familiar that I had missed a big part of this story. Creation, the heavens, the entire cosmos, boiling over with anticipation that HE IS HERE.

I love this particular song, the poetic retelling of the Christmas story, because it tells you why they were so overwhelmed. "The donkey whispered in His ear, child in 30-some odd years you'll ride someone who like me, untriumphantly."

Of course that line is pointing us ahead to the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem on the last week of His earthly life. What we call Palm Sunday. As Jesus went into Jerusalem, riding unceremoniously on a donkey. He had "set his face" to Jerusalem, going full well knowing He would lay His life down. You can say, wait, how did we get to the end, we are celebrating Christmas. This is Christmas Eve, this is joy and peace and love and the baby Jesus. Yes, yes, yes, and yes- BUT the only way any of those things come, the only reason all of this is possible is by seeing the whole story. Jesus didn't just come to be the baby in the manger, He didn't just come to be the perfect example, but He came to be the perfect sacrifice, to destroy sin and death.

Read with along with me, as I read the end of this wonderful Christmas song.

***and the night was cool and clear as glass with the sneaking snake in the garden grass deep cried out to deep the disciples fast asleep***

***and the snake perked up when he heard You ask "if you're willing that this cup might pass we could find our way back home maybe start a family all our own"***

***"but does not the Father guide the Son? not my will, but yours be done. what else here to do? what else me, but You?"***

***and the snake who'd held the world a stick, a carrot and a string was crushed beneath the foot of your not wanting anything***

Do you see the picture? You know the reference. It's the Garden of Gethsemane, just hours before Jesus would go to the cross. Jesus in the agony of prayer, the finality, the fullness of the picture of what was about to come to fruition prays out- Father if there be any other way, let this cup pass.

The cup He is talking about, is the cup of God's wrath. What we deserve for our sin. What we are due. Our sin, undealt with, causing the crumbling of creation, the mess we see around us. What stands between us and not wanting anything. Jesus in the face of becoming the sin of all that would put their faith in Him, laying down His life, bearing the wrath of God for our sin, stands up- knowing full well what is coming and says, "Not my will but yours be done," and He arises and walks straight to the cross. He goes to make right what man made wrong, bringing low the hills, that the valley might be filled.

I love this song, and the picture here. All creation awaits with bated breath for the coming of Jesus, but the story cannot be complete without what He came to do. If you don't have the ends, and it is just Jesus in the manger it is not complete. That is not the full story, the story is not just Jesus in the manger, it's JESUS in the garden and ultimately on the cross and then the empty tomb, after the resurrection. Then we see the fullness of what God has come to do.

This is how the scriptures tell the story, even from the very beginning. Matthew 1 says ... **angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup>She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."**

The story of Christmas, is the story of the cross and what Jesus came to do. He has saved us from our sins. He has made it where we are not wanting in anything. He has taken our sin, paid the penalty that we deserve, and then by grace through faith He gives us all the wonderful perfection of His life, so we can proclaim, **"Sinners, come inside, with no money, come and buy, no clever talk, nor gift to bring requires our lowly, lovely king. Come empty handed, you don't need anything."**