**Luke 2:15-20**

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.” **16** And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. **17** And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. **18** And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. **19** But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. **20** And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

**“Jesus IS The Gift”**

 Blessed Christmas Day to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. There are plenty of stories to enjoy at Christmas. There are the classics like The Miracle on 34th Street, A Christmas Carol, Rudolph The Red Nosed Reindeer, Scrooge, and How The Grinch Stole Christmas. However, our culture never gets enough of stories even at this time of the year. It is why going to the movies is a big hit even on Christmas Day. Nine movies are being released on this very day throughout the nation. Our local theaters lists the following: The Gambler, Theory of Everything, Unbroken, Annie, Exodus: Gods & Kings, Night at the Museum: Secret Of The Tomb, and finally The Hobbit: Battle Of Five Armies.

 We need to get beyond looking down on those lost in the maze of entertainment media. Instead, let us realize plenty did not know the story of Christ’s birth except for a few Shepherds. They had the exclusive rights to the story God produced for the sake of saving a sinful world. Where plenty jump from one story to the next, what we celebrate over the birth of Christ does not expire. Man can forget this story or run after something more exciting, but it always comes back to the what the Word has spoken. We try to downplay gifts to avoid worshiping stuff or selfish gain above other things at Christmas. Yet, there is one gift that does matter and God gladly gives it. Jesus is the gift for you, for me, for all people.

1. The gift given is a story from heaven.
2. More than angels, it is the Word that set apart their message.
* They delivered this good news from God to shepherds minding their own business.
* Heaven had to bring the story to earth. “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” (Luke 2:11-12)
1. More than just a story is how the Word comes by preaching even at Christmas.
* Like the shepherds, without the Word sinners will never believe in Christ by their own efforts.
* Luther tells us, “Whoever does not receive the Word for its own sake, will never receive it for the sake of the preacher, even if all the angels preached it to him.” (Postils Vol. 1 162)
1. The gift received is thus a story to see.
2. More than gazing at angels was how the shepherds wanted to confirm this glorious news in their lives.
* They went to Bethlehem for there the story had a fixed foundation by what “the Lord has made known to us.” (2:15b)
* They heard salvation in darkness, but drew near to God wrapped in swaddling clothes at the dawn of a new day! (after searching)
1. More than traditions for Christmas is to go where God confirms His glorious love for us.
* Bethlehem literally means “house of bread” and this bread of life is Christ who has fixed for us to go to His Church.
* The Word and Sacrament are how we draw near to see Jesus wrapped up to save us from our sad stories shrouded in sin, death, and the Devil.
1. The gift celebrated is finally a story to share.
2. More than fear reigned for what God revealed to the shepherds became a revelation for others.
* Plenty wondered over what the story meant no less than the woman at the empty tomb!
* Only Mary took the story sent by angels seriously treasuring “up all these things, pondering them in her heart.”
1. More than silence wins the day for Christmas leaves us to celebrate Christ in our lives.
* There will always be wonder over what the story of Christ means.
* Only those humble like Mary will look beyond a mere story to treasure the truth of what God says.

 Jesus is the gift for you, for me, for all people. We are not able to see the babe in the manger like the shepherds. Christ has suffered, died, and risen to eternal glory, but the Scriptures are where we now find Him. As the story of Christmas echoes out once again today, it joins in shaping the story of our lives just as we lose our lives in this story for God has become man to save man. Amen. Now may the peace sent at Christmas that passes all understanding be with both now and always in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.