

Sermon 2011 Christmas Eve
December 24, 2011
Text: Psalm 2
Theme: "Raging Nations...Plotting Peoples"

On this night, we speak of peace and joy and a sweet baby, born in a stable and lying in a manger. Well, maybe at other churches they do that sweetness and light mess, but this is Trinity, Villa Park where we have a little grit in our boxers. This is not a sweet night about little babies. The very son of God took on our flesh this night. God became man through the Virgin Mary, and why did he do that? He did what he did this night for one reason only...so that he could live a life in a miserable, vulnerable human body, die a horribly excruciating death on the cross, and be damned to hell for our sins. Now Have a Very Merry Christmas and enjoy sipping your eggnog while listening to various artists croon about sleigh rides and reindeer and a fat man in a red suit.

Though the story began in the Garden of Eden tonight, we come to the baby in a manger. We all know the story. Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem for the census. No room in the Inn because of everyone being in town for the census. The infant coming in the night. A stable for animals; the only shelter. Joseph, already an old man by this time, feeling like an absolute failure as he leads his young wife among the animals where she must give birth to her firstborn son in

a pile of straw. Enter human flesh – Jesus Christ, Son of God, Prince of Peace, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God.

But the story does not end with a bunch of shepherds worshipping him. It does not end with wise men coming from the East. It ends with that baby dying. It ends with Mary, having pondered all these things and treasured them up in her heart, crying her eyes out on John's shoulder at the foot of the cross. The story ends with Jesus Christ, Son of God, Prince of Peace, Everlasting Father, Mighty God... dying... by crucifixion... and being damned to hell.

Sorry. I'm not here tonight to proclaim fluffy platitudes and warm sentiments. Go to Hallmark or Oprah for that. I am here to proclaim the cold, harsh reality of a fully human baby lying in damp, itchy straw at the beginning of his life, a life that would only get worse as he went along. But he did go along and that is why we rejoice on this night, because as he promised, that fully human baby, who was also fully God, on this night, put our salvation into motion.

However, there was nothing peaceful, pleasant or happy about this night. Did you ever notice that the Bible rarely records any kind of demonic possession or evil spirits interfering with human beings until this point in the Scriptures? Until this night, Satan had been lulled into a false sense of security. He would roam around the earth

and have his way with most people while God had his precious chosen people who could do no wrong. That was fine with him, but then this night came and there was no peace this night in Hell.

All of Hell heard the battle cry as the heavenly host tore the sky apart over those shepherds in the field and a new star came into being in the heavens. Satan heard the blast of the ram's horn as the angels sang the Gloria in Excelsis and he knew that this was the signal for his demise because what had been promised in the Garden of Eden had suddenly and with no warning, come to fruition – from woman God had brought the one to crush his head.

Hell was about to be all undone. The dragon fought valiantly but he could not stop what God had set in motion. He tried using Herod. He tried using the Pharisees. He tried going head to head with Jesus in the desert and nothing worked. Raging nations and plotting people but on Good Friday, that filthy worm found himself mortally wounded and living a slow and tortuous life that, quite frankly, makes crucifixion look no worse than a bad fruitcake. So what does he do while he awaits Christ's return when he will be sealed in hell forever and all of his power will be removed? He writhes around like a worm on a hot sidewalk and causes whatever trouble he can.

That is why the nations continue to rage and the people continue to plot in vain and they always will! And for all the restless raging and empty, vain plotting, what does the Lord do? He laughs. The king has already been set on his holy hill. He was set there quite accidentally by Satan himself who saw to it that on Golgotha, the King would undo Satan by sacrificing himself. No amount of plotting and raging will accomplish anything now, but you can't tell that to Satan or his followers because that is the life they chose. He puts on a good show though.

Some people live their lives in fear of all his nonsense, but there is no need to fear anything in this life. When I go to the gym, I listen to this group of old men who are always talking about the way the world is going to hell in a hand basket. I have to tell you that locker room talk at my age is not nearly as interesting as it was in high school. But I digress. I feel bad for people who are so afraid of all the nations raging and people plotting. We too, like God, can laugh. Luther says,

"Let us laugh at raging Satan and the world (yes, even at sin and our conscience in us). Truly, because the punishment of the godless is delayed up to now, it is certain that God is also laughing, God, who is in heaven and cannot be driven from there by impious men. Therefore, He rightly laughs at their vain attempts. We may

think that we would also laugh if we were seated in such a high place and a fortress so fortified.... But these thoughts reveal our lack of faith. For all of us who believe in Christ are most truly in that same heaven in which the Lord dwells, if not in the flesh, nevertheless in faith and in the Word.”

We continue journeying on through this world for a time, but we are already in heaven, so we can laugh. Nations rage. People plot and we laugh. We know how this all ends – we don't fear greenhouse gasses or war in the Middle East or financial ruin because we have already won... all because of the baby that was born this night. He is our King. He has conquered. Tonight we celebrate his victory and look forward to his return which next time will not be in the humility of human infancy but in the glory of divinity.