

# Christ the Lord Episcopal Church Pinole, CA

Christmas Day: December 25, 2022

“Christmas Simple”

Rev. Dr. Lois Williams

Good morning and Merry Christmas, welcome to Christ the Lord Church. Last night, Christmas Eve was a wonderful evening to celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, with music and fanfare. Today, we come without pomp or circumstance, just ourselves, our voices lifted in prayer and song. How perfect for our simple story about the birth of Jesus.

There are two themes I would like to ponder with you today, one is that God can use anyone at anytime to do his work, whether they are aware of it or not, and that God often chooses the simple over the complicated.

We have in our Gospel story today the reason Mary and Joseph end up in Bethlehem. There is a census and they need to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Now this seems pretty simple when you think about it, but is it that simple? Remember the prophets of the Old Testament set the stage for the Messiah to be born in Bethlehem, yet God chooses a woman and man from a different area, a different town. Why would the story start in Nazareth?

Historians do tell of taxes and census being taking, especially when it comes to financing the fine Roman soldiers and building palaces and temples, but let's look a little deeper. Emperor Augustus didn't just pull this occasion out of a hat, and Mary didn't just get pregnant at an inopportune time.

God was using those in power and control, those that had agreed to God's will and even those who were unaware. Thus, landing Mary and baby Jesus in Bethlehem just as the prophets had foretold.

As we struggle in a world today with so many conflicting powers that be, we can often forget that God is in the midst of it. In our story today we do not hear the details of those running the town, or the people who filled the lodgings, we don't have the details of those that turned Mary and Joseph away, we don't know exactly where and how they ended up where they were, but God did. Each and every face, each and every circumstance in just the right place at just the right time. Even if it means starting your life, in a barn.

The angels who came to the shepherds, again an interesting choice – shepherds, not the rich and famous, and for all the excitement and celebration of what was a silent and holy night, we have the shepherds proclaiming Jesus and his glory, which in turn – would eventually push Mary, Joseph and Jesus to flee to Egypt to escape Herod, again, God using those even without their awareness.

This day, the day Jesus is born, the new light breaks in, we will learn that the fiery judgmental God was more man made, than the spirit born babe who will challenge those without sin to cast the first stone, showing acceptance to those with a sinful reputation, and to remind the faithful that the Temple was a place of worship not an auction house for the Temple priests.

Jesus knew each disciple deeply, he knows each of us. I wonder what this new year will bring. I wonder how God will use those in power, those around me, and even

how God will use me, to continue to bring the Kingdom of God here right now? And that brings me to the simple.

There is nothing portrayed in our nativity scene that isn't simple. This seems to be the way Jesus will grow and continue his life and ministry. It seems the mother of God managed just fine in a strange town, tucked away, a few cloths, a manger. The humans in this story are satisfied with the simple. God is content with the simple. For all the cloaks, gold, burnt offerings and historic Hebrew linages, this evening, a babe, a simple child in meek surroundings.

This year I invite you to look toward the more simple ways you can spend your time, the calmer, quieter, self caring moments that allow you to commune with God. Turn down the noise in your life for a moment to embrace the simple perfectness of God, the creator of what was, is and will be, the energy of the big bang, all present and presented in a child bound in cloth.

You may feel burdened by your current life situations, but know this, God is with you there and you may be part of a bigger plan. You are a precious cog, in God's creation, you are beloved, and maybe, with some deep reflections, you might figure out what God has taught you thus far on your journey, or it may remain a mystery, but where and who you are right now, is alright, even if sometimes it doesn't feel that way.

If trying to wind your head around what you believe, especially about this precious, but not necessarily historic story, and it makes your head hurt. Think of the teachings we have here today. Take home the spiritual lesson. God not only

accepts the simple things about us and our situations, but it is often when he shows us himself and is born again.

For all the philosophy in the world, all the religious and theological themes, God is in your heart, that small still voice. You may or not make a choice like Emperor Augustus, a governmental decision that is recorded in scripture for centuries, but God is working with you, and in each and every one of us. Remember, you are Amazing Creations of God, and entered the world a babe just like Jesus. Merry Christmas. Amen