

IN A MANGER

Hillsboro Presbyterian Church

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Babies. Everybody loves babies...almost. Often we are mesmerized by them. Today we are going to look at the baby born on Christmas who was placed in a manger. The angels sang about him, the shepherds sought him, and magi worshiped him...and Mary and Joseph...they changed his diapers! "Change" has been our word this Advent season. The "change" in our pockets remind us of why Christ came – penny past, nickel "n" us now, determined is my eternity, and quarter of good seed grew. Then we considered when God changes our plans like he did with Mary and Joseph. In this message we consider the baby we find in the manger. And though our tendency may be to "ahh"...we need to remember sometimes it's "ew" (as Mary and Joseph discovered) that Jesus is a REAL baby.

Mary and Joseph named their baby "Jesus", which is the Aramaic for "Joshua" or "God saves". In their culture, your name revealed your essence. If you learned someone's name, you learned the roots of their family and the wings of their parents' dream for them. "Jesus" or "God saves" means "this person is one God uses to deliver from evil and to deliver to life." But if you really want to understand all that Jesus wants to do in your life you've got to understand his names. 700 years before Jesus was born Isaiah prophesied ([Isaiah 9:6](#)) **"For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and his name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, and Prince of Peace."**

Four truths we find in the manger and the significance they have for us today.

WONDERFUL COUNSELOR * see the presence that is in the manger. The help of God for us.

Like many of you, Jesus is my BFF....my Best Friend Forever. I can tell Jesus anything, at any time. And like a best friend, Jesus tells me his thoughts...speaks to me truth that I need to know or need to remember. Jesus accepts me as I am, but loves me too much to leave me that way. Jesus knows me better than I know myself and knows the person God created me to be. Do you know Jesus as "wonderful counselor"? Have you found Jesus to be God's help reaching out to you?

We all need help, don't we? We don't like to admit it, but we do. [Genesis 2:20](#) tells us that when God created the first human, God saw we needed help...that is why God gave us to each other. When Jesus was getting ready to return to heaven, he told his followers that God would send **"another Counselor to be with you forever"** ([John 14:16](#)). Jesus was talking about the Holy Spirit – who would be just like Jesus ...who is also called "the helper". Think about that. When you ask Jesus into your heart as your Lord and Savior, Jesus gives to you God's Holy Spirit for the help we need.

So in Jesus we have both God's presence and God's power...how wonderful is that?

MIGHTY GOD * see the glory that is in the manger. The awe of God for us.

God Himself is in the manger. [Hebrews 1:3](#) says **"(Jesus) is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of God's being..."** John wrote ([1:14](#)) **"We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only..."** When you look at baby Jesus are you filled with awe?

When my children were little we had a ceramic manger scene...similar to the one on the church organ. I remember one year as we were setting it up, my daughter asked, "Can I put Jesus in the manger?" I said "it's really small and it's breakable. Maybe I'd better do it." "Please! Please! Can I put Jesus in the manger scene?" Of course, I said yes. And of course, if you tell somebody again and again, I'm afraid you might break it, what do you think happens? Baby Jesus was not in her little fingers for a nanosecond until he was on the floor shattered. I'd love to say that as a father I handled it perfectly...but I can't. I can say though that super glue works! And after we put Jesus back together, we super glued Jesus into the manger so we wouldn't go through that ever again!

Friends, we cannot super glue Jesus into the manger. The glory of God breaks out of every box that we try to put God in. The glory of God came into this world at Christmas...that is what is in the manger. God wants us to be filled with awe and to realize through Jesus God can do more in our lives than we can ever dream or imagine. There's more glory of God in that manger than in a thousand Red Seas being parted or than in a million stars in the sky. God came into this world at Christmas! But the way we're wired as human beings it's easy for us to miss the glory of God...to get focused on the details and miss it. After all, Christmas comes around every year. So it's worth remembering the Incarnation...The baby in the manger is God in human flesh. GOD...the creator, the sustainer, the ruler over all. Look at your thumbprint. He made that. He formed you, he fashioned you, he fingerprinted you. That is the God that came into this world at Christmas. How in the world do you fit God into a baby? It's like trying to fit the Pacific Ocean into a thimble. How do you do that? One word: "humility." God humbled himself to become a human baby.

I came across this quote: "He who is the creator became a creature. He who is eternal allowed himself to be bound by time. He whom the heavens can't contain was enclosed in a woman's womb. He who is clothed in majesty was born in a cattle trough. He who is the sovereign God became dependant on a human man and woman for his food and clothing. He who had spoken whole worlds and galaxies into existence had to depend upon baby cries to communicate. The God of the universe became a baby." At some point this Christmas, be filled with awe as you see glory in the manger.

ETERNAL FATHER * see the love that is in the manger. The love of God for us.

Every good love is based on God's great love. God's love is a sacrificial, self giving love. We were created in love for the purpose of love. The eternal love of God is the love of God the Father. I know that can be confusing. How can Jesus be the Son and the Father? That's the trinity – Father Son and Holy Spirit. The trinity of God loves you. I could take hours to explain the trinity...or you can just take my word for it. The trinity of God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - loves you. That is the love that is in the manger. God loves you. The most familiar verse about that in the Bible, familiar to many of us, is [John 3:16](#). **"God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son so that whoever believes in him may not be lost, but have eternal life."** That's God's love for you. When I get to know God through his Son Jesus Christ that love is experienced in my life.

God is not going to force Himself into your life. God has done everything needed to have a relationship with you. But we have to receive God's love...to accept God's gift that reconciles us and transforms us into children of God. Jesus is God's love reaching out to this world...and to us.

PRINCE OF PEACE * see the authority that is in the manger. The kingdom of God for us.

There is a bumper sticker out that says "No Jesus, no peace. Know Jesus, know peace." Have you seen that – or heard that? Friends, it is true. Every week I pray with someone facing surgery or someone grieving or someone overwhelmed by troubles or someone dealing with pain – and we always pray for God's peace to come upon them. God's peace is more than the absence of conflict. Certainly we pray for wars to cease...but you can be in turmoil in a land at peace and you can be at peace in a land at turmoil. God's peace is that inner calm that comes from knowing God is in charge and that God loves you as His own and that you can trust God completely. Jesus said to his followers in [John 14:27](#) **"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."** See in the manger the One who is the Kings of Kings...and the Prince of Peace...peace for your heart, for your life, for our world.

"Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace" – may these names for Messiah open our eyes and hearts to the One who comes to us in a manger, Jesus Christ our Lord.