



ST STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

11856 MAYS CHAPEL RD., TIMONIUM, MD 21093

Christmas Day, Sunday December 25, 2016

**✠ In The Name of The Father and of The Son
and of The Holy Ghost. Amen. ✠**

The passage selected for the sermon this morning is taken from the Gospel;

“Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and laying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace good will towards men.”

Luke 2:12-14

When I was teaching, my 10th grade students would often ask me, “Why is it you believe in Jesus?” After all, I looked normal to them, or some acceptable version of normal. I was smart enough, had been to a good school, and even had had some success in the world. It puzzled them that someone they recognized as smart could so confidently affirm his faith in Jesus.

The answer was of course, that no matter how smart we are, or think we are, we cannot come to confidence in our faith through reasoning or rationality. The events that affirm our faith undeniably are the comings or goings of people from this mortal coil. It is then that the façade of reality thins so that we see through to the other side, and our recognition of God’s power in our lives takes firm root. Since this is Christmas,

today we will talk about the power of God as manifested in a birth.

A baby is inherently powerful. We think of them as powerless, but in reality, what we see is that they are vulnerable. From the moment a baby is born, it begins to re-shape the world and reality of its family. Its father and mother are re-defined by the baby’s needs. We were once Mike and Carolyn, but we are now, the children’s parents. Keeping that baby fed, and dry and safe becomes the point of a parent’s life, replacing every other vanity we may have pursued. If you doubt a baby’s power to command from its crib, defy the tired mother or father who begs you, “SSSHHH! Don’t wake the baby!”

The birth of any baby is a world shaking event to the parents. The awe and perfection of creation is laid bare in miracle of life and breath first grasped. The true nature of love is revealed, humbling us and disintegrating all our vanities. Who we are, who we are meant to be, explodes into our consciousness as an Epiphany, and the pointlessness of the charades of this world’s power and glory wither in the presence of God’s truth, that we were made in Love by our Father for the purpose of being loved by Him, and that the one true gift is the love we have the privilege

to return to Him and share with those He gives us.

Do any of you remember the book or miniseries, Roots. When my daughter was born, I was filled with pride, not in some symbolic way, but literally, my chest swelled with joy, and my eyes teared up, and the baby was lifted to heaven in my arms so that I could swear to God that she would have everything she could ever need or want. Until suddenly, a realization washed over me, humbling me and changing me forever. I could not give her the world. In fact, this little child had just given the world to me. I was changed forever by the miracle of God's grace, not only in His power to give life, but in His unimaginable kindness to share that life with me. To share with me, what it meant to love as the Father.

My life changed. My doubts evaporated. My purpose was made clear. The pretensions of this world were unmasked. I knew, in a way I could never have learned by reason alone, why I was here and what I was meant to do.

If just any child can change a world so profoundly, imagine the power inherent in God's only Son as he takes upon Himself our nature in His Incarnation. A child is born and wrapped in swaddling clothes. He is laid in the hay of the manger of stable. We use the pretty French word, Creche, instead of stable as we romanticize the Infant's birth, but the reality was the baby was born in a stable that functioned like stables do today, filled with the smell of hay, pre and post digested. Not a lovely smell, not very sanitary, not a very privileged or romantic birth, and yet the humble stable walls evaporated into the choir pews of a multitude of the heavenly host as they sang their praises. Shepherds and wise men travelled to pay homage. Even the very stars of the sky oriented the heavens to announce His birth.

In that moment the world was changed. The pretensions and lies and aimlessness of this world

were revealed as inconsequential to our purpose. The barrier between heaven and earth dissolved. Communion between man and God was restored. The way home to our heavenly father was revealed as the Jesus Christ, the Way and the Life.

Let us join the angels as the proclaim, Glory be to God on high, and on earth, peace good will towards men.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen