

Scripture:

Isaiah 9:2-7

Luke 1:26-38

Luke 2:1-20

“Jesus is not part of the Christmas story.”

It's true ----- Jesus is not part of the Christmas story.

Rather ---- Christmas is part of the story of Jesus.

Jesus is not part of the Christmas story --- rather ----- the Christmas story is part of the Jesus story.

More precisely --- the Christmas story is a chapter in the Jesus story.

It's not even really the opening chapter --- it's really nearer to the end of the Jesus story.

If you choose for Jesus to be just another character among many in your Christmas story --- that is your prerogative ---- but know that if you do ---- it has now become your Christmas story --- and not THE Christmas story.

Jesus did not come to enter into someone else's story ---- a Christmas story - ---- as just another character.

He came --- God sent Him ---- as His own story.

And Christmas is one of many chapters in His story.

For example ----- there are the prophets ---- we heard from one earlier ----- Isaiah --- who in chapter 9 refers to Jesus in familiar words --- ---- “The people in darkness have seen a great light...”

---- and

“For a child has been born --- a son given
and the government will rest on his shoulders
And he will be called
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting father, Prince of Peace...”

These are familiar words in the Jesus story--- from a chapter long before He was even born.

And there are other chapters that are familiar as well ----- Easter --- and Good Friday for example --- most people are familiar with these chapters --- or at least parts of them.

On Good Friday Jesus is killed ---- crucified --- and then 3 days later --- on Easter Day He is seen walking around again talking with people ---- alive --- resurrected.

And of course there are lesser known chapters as well ----- the Transfiguration ---- His Baptism ---- His Ascension ---- The Epiphany.

Many people are likely familiar with the last one there --- The Epiphany.

Epiphany is the 12th day of Christmas --- you know the song --- the 12 days of Christmas --- well Epiphany is the 12th day of Christmas when the wise men came and brought gifts of --- Gold --- Frankincense ---and Myrrh to baby Jesus.

Epiphany the 12th day of Christmas is another chapter in the story of Jesus.

And then there's the annunciation --- we heard about it earlier tonight in Luke 1 verse 26-38.

The annunciation --- another chapter in Jesus' story --- a kind of important one really --- because the date of Christmas was determined by the date of the annunciation.

FYI ---- Christmas has nothing to do with the winter solstice --- or any other pagan festival for that matter.

The annunciation --- March 25th --- is the chapter in the Jesus story where Mary finds out she is pregnant ---- and so this date was used to determine the date of Jesus' birth.

Christmas Day is 9 months after the angel tells Mary she is pregnant --- March 25th is the annunciation ---- and so Jesus birth date was set 9 months later on December 25th Christmas Day.

Jesus is not part of the Christmas story --- Jesus is the Christmas story --- even more to the point --- the Christmas story is part of the Jesus story.

We're not just here tonight for the Christmas story --- although that's part of it ----- what we're truly here for is the Jesus story ----- of which Christmas is a part.

But it's critical to get ----- the emphasis on the right syllable.

The story --- the reality ---- the truth that we are celebrating tonight --- is the Jesus story --- and one chapter in particular --- the birth chapter --- the Christmas chapter.

But the birth chapter doesn't really mean much without also all the other chapters.

Annunciation ---- crucifixion --- resurrection --- ascension --- transfiguration --- and so on.

This advent --- the 4 weeks leading up to Christmas ----- here at St. Andrew's ----- we've been focusing on what we've called --- "The cradle to the cross."

"The cradle to the cross." ----- the whole story of Jesus from the cradle --- crèche --- crib ----- through to the cross ----- and of course beyond the cross as well ----- the whole story of Jesus --- all the chapters --- that's what our display here at the front is all about --- cradle --- cross --- and the journey --- the whole life of Christ.

If you have a small child --- you may have gotten one of these on the way in tonight.

And on it --- are the words ----- "All families need a stable foundation."

"All families need a stable foundation."

"Stable" as in --- stable where Jesus was born --- and "stable" ---- as in rock solid --- not wavering or fickle.

Jesus brings stability to an ever fickle ---- flighty --- and unpredictable world.

Tonight we gather to celebrate a beautiful thing --- a beautiful chapter in a beautiful story.

God stepping down into His creation in human form and showing us by example how we are to live.

God stepping down into His creation in human form reminding us what dependence and promise mean.

God stepping down into His creation and putting into motion His great rescue plan for a fallen world.

The world isn't always all that beautiful ---- cancer --- disease ----- Alzheimer's ---- depression ----- MS --- to name a few less than beautiful things in this world.

The world isn't always beautiful ---- war --- armed conflict --- abuse suffering --- starvation ---- greed --- deceit --- and so on --- a few more -----
- less than beautiful things in this world.

The world isn't always beautiful.

But we do have glimpses of beauty --- and truth --- and love --- and promise.

And tonight we get a glimpse of beauty ---- a beautiful chapter in the Jesus story.

The not yet finished ----- "T be continued..." --- Jesus story.

Perhaps this is the biggest challenge with the Jesus story --- the fact that we sometimes think of it as a closed book ---- a story that has reached its ending --- and is already over.

Christmas is a chapter --- one of the beautiful one's --- well they're all beautiful in different ways.

But Christmas is a beautiful chapter in a story that isn't finished yet.

Christmas is a chapter in the Jesus story --- and the Jesus story simply put just isn't finished yet.

Jesus came ----- and then He left --- ascended ----- went back up to be with God ----- and just before He left --- He told us that He would come back once again.

But He hasn't yet --- and so that's the --- "To be continued" ---- part of the story.

And until that chapter of the story happens --- we do what we're doing here tonight.

Gather together.

Gather together ----- amidst the sometimes ugliness of the world --- and celebrate the little glimpses of beauty that we get while we're here in mostly hostile circumstances.

The world is fallen --- not as God intended it to be.

But we are provided with little glimpses of glory --- truth --- love ----- faithfulness --- and goodness.

These are what enable us to carry on ----- until the story finds its completion.

So no --- Jesus isn't part of the Christmas story --- rather the Christmas story is a chapter in the Jesus story.

And we shouldn't ever get it mixed up --- or we miss the whole point.

Jesus' story is a beautiful --- multifaceted ----- never ending ----- not yet finished --- "To be continued..." ----- story.

And as we live --- day to day ----- going to work ----- filling up the car with gas ---- changing a diaper ----- taking the garbage out ----- going for groceries ---- washing dishes ---- washing the floor --- washing our clothes -- -- reading a book --- watching TV ---- fixing a dripping faucet ---- changing a light bulb ----- eating --- cleaning up --- going to bed.

As we live.

We wait --- and we anticipate.

We sometimes celebrate --- we sometimes grieve.

We have good days --- we have not so good days.

We have some absolutely awesome ones --- and a few horrible ones too.

We have some sad days ----- and some glad days --- and we have everything in between days.

As we wait for an anticipate ---- the story of Jesus --- God's great story --- to reach its conclusion.

As we wait for the final chapter to unfold ---- we get some glimpses of the beauty that is to come.

The Christmas story isn't the whole story --- it's but a chapter in the whole story.

The --- "To be continued..." story of God's great plan for His creation.

Isaiah 9 --- offers us a glimpse into some of the details of this story ----- we heard it read earlier-----

“For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the greatness of his government and peace
there will be no end.
He will reign on David's throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness

from that time on and forever.
The zeal of the Lord Almighty
will accomplish this.”

The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this ---- in other words ----
God will accomplish this ---- He just hasn't chosen to finish off the story yet.

And that will happen ----- only when Jesus comes again and lives out the
final chapter and completes things.

Until then we wait.

We gather ----- we celebrate.

We sometimes mourn --- we sometime grieve.

We wait --- we anticipate.

We yearn and we long for God to finish up the story --- and complete His
plan.

Jesus is not part of the Christmas story ----- the Christmas story is part of the
Jesus story ----- and the Jesus story isn't over yet.

Until it is we carry on --- gathering in His name --- celebrating --- praising --
- and worshipping God --- the author of the story.

Merry Christmas.

Amen.