

Christmas Eve, 2009

Text: Luke 2:1-20

Title: Christmas Every Week

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Ready or not, Christmas is here.

Wouldn't it be great to have Christmas every week?

Now, I know what you're probably thinking.

You're probably thinking, "What, are you nuts?"

You're probably thinking about all the work, all the busyness, all the stress that Christmas brings-

- Decorating the house and cleaning it, getting ready for guests
- Going shopping, fighting the crowds, the lines, the parking lots, the traffic, and wrapping presents
- Writing a Christmas letter and sending out Christmas cards
- Trying to squeeze in all the Christmas parties and events
- Baking cookies and cooking for Christmas dinner

Christmas has come to mean more work and bother for all of us.

But put that aside for a moment. Stop thinking like a responsible adult, and start thinking like a little child.

Now, I'll ask you again.

Wouldn't it be great to have Christmas every week?

Think of all the joy of being a child at Christmas-

- Seeing the special lights and decorations up
- Opening the presents
- Singing Christmas carols
- Going to parties, and spending time with at Grandma and Grandpa's
- Eating Candy and cookies
- Getting out of school for a couple of weeks
- Waiting for Santa to show up

Think of all the joy there would be if we could have Christmas every week, Christmas all the time!

Since you're here, you know that Christmas is about more than presents and decorations and food and parties. You know that Christmas is about the birth of a Savior. It's about Mary and Joseph, it's about the angels and the shepherds. Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth.

It's a wonderful message, it's a wonderful story, and wouldn't it be great if we could have that every week?

And wouldn't it be great if we could actually be part of the story. To hear the angels sing, to meet with Mary and Joseph, to see Jesus lying in the manger, and to actually hold the baby Jesus in our arms?

Actually, we do have Christmas every week here in the Divine Service. Sure, we don't have the tree and the wreaths and the Christmas decorations up year round, and we don't sing Christmas carol or get out all the candles every week, but every Sunday is a little Christmas, and every Sunday you become part of the story, too.

The Christmas story begins with a trip to Bethlehem. Bethlehem was a small town, out of the way. Our Lord came from humble beginnings. He wasn't born in Rome or Athens, he wasn't even born in Jerusalem, but in a small, rural village. It was the kind of place that you'd come home to, if you had family there, but that was about it.

And after the long journey to Bethlehem, there was rejection. No one had room for very pregnant Mary and her husband Joseph. You'd think in a town full of their relative, someone would have a guest room, or a pull-out couch, or a futon for Joe and Mary, but they were all full up and no one wanted to make room. So our Lord was born in a barn, and a feeding trough was his first bed.

There was nothing spectacular about Jesus' birth. He came into the world in an ordinary way, just like you and me.

Too often we look for God in the spectacular, but he chooses to hide himself in the ordinary.

THEY all were looking for a king
To slay their foes and lift them high:
Thou cam'st, a little baby thing
That made a woman cry.

This way you know that it's for you. God is not way out there, high above and out of reach. God is a man, a little baby, who eats and sleeps and cries just like you. That is the mystery of Christmas- that God came to the ordinary world to be one of us.

The Lord still comes to ordinary places. Oak Lawn is a nice place to live, but at the end of the day, it's one of many suburbs of Chicago. Oak Lawn is not a major tourist destination. Oak Lawn doesn't have any profession sports teams. People don't drive across the country or fly from all over the world to visit Oak Lawn.

And this church is a very nice building, but you might miss it if you're in a hurry, on your way to the mall or just cutting through the neighborhood. It's not spectacular, it's no cathedral or basilica. But the Lord has chosen to come here.

The Lord makes the journey here to Oak Lawn, every week. And He chooses to come here to this very room. He doesn't come to the Sears Tower, to Millenium Park, or to Soldier Field; He doesn't have an office downtown in the Daley Center or McCormick Place. He comes here to this tiny church and makes this place his home. He makes Oak Lawn His Bethlehem and this altar is His manger.

Sure, God is everywhere, but He is not everywhere with His grace and gifts of salvation. He was not made flesh everywhere, but only in Jesus Christ. In the proclamation of His word and in His body and blood, Jesus is here for you every week as your Savior. This is where Christmas happens every week.

At the first Christmas, the angels rejoiced and sang.

The angels are here, too, week after week, and we join in their song. "Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men." Just think, the angels who serenaded the shepherds come here, to this very spot every week to sing along with you. They are here because Jesus is here, just as He was in Bethlehem's manger.

The song of the angels drew the shepherds to the manger. The words created faith in the Shepherds to believe that a Savior had been born for them.

As you hear the good news, week after week, the words create faith in your heart to believe that a Savior has been born for you. That the Lord has come to bring peace on earth.

And so, like the shepherds, you are drawn to the manger to see the Savior for yourself.

This altar is the new manger, where the baby Jesus is swaddled in bread and wine for you, to be your Savior, to bring you peace.

No love that in a family dwells,
Nor caroling in frosty air,
Nor all the steeple-shaking bells
Can with this single Truth compare -
That God was Man in Palestine
And lives to-day in Bread and Wine.

When the Shepherds had seen Jesus, they told everyone about this special child. Every week the Lord sends you out from this place to tell everyone the wonderful news that a Savior has been born.

And Mary. Mary couldn't stop thinking about everything that had happened. She had enough from this one night to think about all her life. The Lord gives you something to think about, to ponder week after week.

Every week is a little Christmas. Every week the Lord comes here to this place, and the same flesh and blood that was wrapped in swaddling cloths and laid in a manger is put into your mouth in the Lord's Supper.

If you're looking for the Christmas joy of the angels, that caused them to sing with all their might at Jesus' birth, it is here, week after week for you.

If you're looking for the Christmas faith of the shepherds, that brought them to their Savior and led them out rejoicing, glorifying God and telling everyone about him, it is here, week after week for you.

If you're looking for the Christmas wonder of Mary, who saw and heard so much that one night, that she had a lifetime to reflect on it, it is here, week after week for you.

If you're looking for the love in the face of a mother holding her newborn child, the love lasts forever, the love that not even death can destroy, it is here, week after week for you.

Jesus was not just born once 2000 years ago, to live, die and leave us. He knows that one Christmas is not enough. He knows how much you need him. And so He comes back here, every week for you. It's Christmas every week.