

Luke 2:1-20  
December 24, '17  
Evening

**“THE GUY ON THE ROOF”**

**THE CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS IN OUR HOME ARE, FOR THE MOST PART, EMMA SUE’S DOMAIN.**

**I HELP WITH THEM, BUT SHE KNOWS WHERE THEY GO & HOW THINGS ARE TO BE PROPERLY PLACED.**

**THERE ARE TWO EXCEPTIONS, THOUGH.**

**OVER THE YEARS, I HAVE COLLECTED PIECES FOR A “DOLLAR TREE” CHRISTMAS VILLAGE THAT STAND IN CONTRAST TO EMMA SUE’S “DICKENS VILLAGE” & “ALL THROUGH THE HOUSE” DISPLAYS.**

**MY VILLAGE CONTAINS MORE THAN A HUNDRED & FIFTY PIECES THAT COST LESS THAN A HUNDRED DOLLARS.**

**GOING BACK TO THIS MORNING’S SERMON TITLE, YOU MIGHT BE INCLINED TO ASK *“HOW CAN THIS BE? ISN’T EVERYTHING A DOLLAR AT DOLLAR TREE?”***

**WELL, YES, THAT’S TRUE FOR THE PRIMARY STRUCTURES.**

**BUT MANY OF THE ANCILLARY PIECES – CHARACTERS, TREES, FENCES & THE LIKE - COME IN PACKS OF 4 FOR A DOLLAR.**

**AFTER I FINISH SETTING UP MY “DOLLAR TREE” CHRISTMAS VILLAGE, I USUALLY DO A VIDEO OF IT & SET IT TO MUSIC.**

**FOR THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS, I’VE USED MY FAVORITE CHRISTMAS SONG AS BACKGROUND – WILL MATTINGLY’S COMPOSITION “IT’S CHRISTMAS.”**

**THE OTHER CHRISTMAS DECORATION IN OUR HOME THAT IS MY RESPONSIBILITY IS A BETHLEHEM VILLAGE NATIVITY SET.**

**WHILE IT DOESN'T HAVE AS MANY PIECES AS THE "DOLLAR TREE" VILLAGE, THERE ARE STILL A LOT MORE THAN JUST A SIMPLE NATIVITY SET.**

**I LIKE IT BECAUSE IT GIVES YOU THE CHANCE TO CREATE SOMETHING SIMILAR TO THE PETER BRUEGHEL "NUMBERING AT BETHLEHEM" PAINTING.**

**IN BRUEGHEL'S PAINTING, YOU'RE LEFT WONDERING WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT UNTIL YOU SEE A PREGNANT WOMAN ON A DONKEY BEING LED BY A MAN WITH A SAW OVER HIS SHOULDER.**

**MY BETHLEHEM VILLAGE IS JUST A SET OF HOUSES AND LOTS OF PEOPLE GOING ABOUT THEIR REGULAR DAILY TASKS.**

**IT'S WHAT WE ENVISION BETHLEHEM TO HAVE BEEN WHEN MARY & JOSEPH WERE THERE.**

**AS YOU LOOK AT THE VILLAGE, YOU SEE THE POINT OF IT ALL – BUT YOU HAVE TO REALLY *LOOK* TO SEE IT.**

**A CLOSE-UP VIEW IS WHAT YOU FIND ON THE COVER OF YOUR BULLETIN THIS EVENING.**

**THAT'S A SMALL CORNER OF MY VILLAGE.**

**YOU SEE JOSEPH & MARY WITH THE BABY JESUS BETWEEN THEM IN THE MANGER.**

**IN FRONT OF THEM ARE TWO SHEEP AND THEN YOU SEE THE TRADITIONAL DEPICTION OF THE 3 KINGS.**

**OF COURSE, WE DON'T REALLY KNOW THAT THERE THREE OF THEM & WE DON'T KNOW THEY WERE KINGS & THEY MOST CERTAINLY WEREN'T THERE AT THE TIME OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS & YET OUR TRADITIONAL NATIVITY SCENES ALWAYS INCLUDE THEM.**

**STANDING TO THE RIGHT OF THE KINGS IN MY BETHLEHEM VILLAGE IS A SHEPHERD WITH STAFF IN HAND.**

**ALL THE TRADITIONAL NATIVITY SCENE CHARACTERS ARE THERE.**

**BUT WAIT A SECOND!**

**WHO'S THE GUY ON THE ROOF?!**

**HE'S NOT INCLUDED IN ANY VERSION OF THE CHRISTMAS STORY!**

**I'D LIKE TO TELL YOU THAT EVERY YEAR I PLACE HIM ON THE ROOF OF THE HOUSE (OR INN) WHERE JESUS WAS BORN TO MAKE SOME KIND OF THEOLOGICAL POINT.**

**PART OF THAT IS TRUE.**

**I DO PLACE HIM ON THE ROOF EVERY YEAR – BUT IT'S SIMPLY BECAUSE THAT SEEMS TO BE THE ONLY SPOT IN MY LITTLE VILLAGE THAT HAS ANY ROOM FOR HIM.**

**IT WASN'T UNTIL I WAS PUTTING THE VILLAGE UP THIS YEAR THAT THE THOUGHT OCCURRED TO ME THAT THERE MIGHT BE SOMETHING SIGNIFICANT ABOUT HIS PLACEMENT THERE.**

**IF THERE WASN'T ALREADY SUCH A THING ABOUT AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT MATTER, YOU COULD MAKE A GREAT CHRISTMAS MOVIE ABOUT “THE GUY ON THE ROOF” AND CALL IT “WHILE YOU WERE SLEEPING.”**

**THE GREATEST EVENT IN ALL OF HUMAN HISTORY HAD JUST TAKEN PLACE BENEATH HIM, AND HE SLEPT RIGHT THROUGH IT ALL!**

**I THINK THERE'S AN OBVIOUS PARALLEL TO OUR OWN CELEBRATION OF CHRISTMAS.**

**FOR CHILDREN, ON CHRISTMAS EVE, WHEN THEY GO TO SLEEP, THERE'S A TREE ADORNED WITH NOTHING BUT LIGHTS & ORNAMENTS.**

**WHEN THEY AWAKEN ON CHRISTMAS MORNING, SOMETHING REALLY BIG HAS HAPPENED.**

**THAT VERY SAME TREE IS SURROUNDED BY GIFTS OF EVERY SHAPE & SIZE.**

**FOR CHILDREN, THE CHANGE FROM CHRISTMAS EVE TO CHRISTMAS MORNING IS VISIBLY OBVIOUS.**

**NOT SO FOR THE LITTLE VILLAGE OF BETHLEHEM.**

**AND NOT SO FOR THE GUY ON THE ROOF.**

**HE UNDOUBTEDLY WOKE UP & WENT ABOUT HIS DAILY TASKS AS HE HAD DONE DAY IN AND DAY OUT, WEEK AFTER WEEK, YEAR AFTER YEAR.**

**NOTHING AROUND HIM LOOKED ANY DIFFERENT THAN IT HAD THE DAY BEFORE.**

**THAT'S NOT TO BE CRITICAL OF THE GUY ON THE ROOF, THOUGH.**

**HIS RESPONSE – OR MORE ACCURATELY – LACK OF RESPONSE, IS SIMPLY AN INDICATION OF THE WAY IN WHICH THE EXTRAORDINARY TAKES PLACE IN THE ORDINARINESS OF DAILY LIFE.**

**THERE'S A GREAT STORY OF A WOMAN NAMED LILLIE SWINDELL WHO LIVED IN KITTY HAWK, NORTH CAROLINA IN THE EARLY YEARS OF THE LAST CENTURY.**

**MOST OF YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENED IN KITTY HAWK, NORTH CAROLINA IN THE EARLY YEARS OF THE LAST CENTURY.**

**YES, LILLIE SWINDELL WAS NO MORE THAN A STONE'S THROW FROM THE SPOT WHERE WILBUR & ORVILLE WRIGHT CONDUCTED THEIR FIRST SUCCESSFUL AIRPLANE FLIGHT.**

**SHE COULD HAVE SEEN HISTORY IN THE MAKING IF SHE HAD SIMPLY LOOKED OUT HER KITCHEN WINDOW THAT DAY IN 1906.**

**IN AN INTERVIEW MORE THAN 70 YEARS LATER, LILLIE SWINDELL SAID SHE THOUGHT THEY WERE LIKE CHILDREN PLAYING WITH KITES.**

**SHE SAID, “*I DIDN’T KNOW WHAT HAD HAPPENED UNTIL IT WAS OVER.*”**

**WHAT HAPPENED THAT DAY IN KITTY HAWK, NORTH CAROLINA WOULD CHANGE THE WORLD.**

**AND YET, TO PUT THINGS IN PROPER PERSPECTIVE, IN COMPARISON TO WHAT THE GUY ON THE ROOF MISSED, THE EVENT IN KITTY HAWK WAS LITTLE MORE THAN A TINY BLIP IN HUMAN HISTORY.**

**WHAT TOOK PLACE IN BETHLEHEM MORE THAN 2,000 YEARS AGO IS WHAT WE COMMONLY CALL “THE INCARNATION.”**

**SOMEONE HAS SUGGESTED THAT THE INCARNATION IS WHAT WE HAVE BECOME AS AMERICANS WITH OUR PROPENSITY FOR GETTING OUR MEALS AT DRIVE-THROUGH RESTAURANTS.**

**THAT’S NOT WHAT WE MEAN.**

**THE INCARNATION IS WHAT C.S. LEWIS CALLS “THE GRAND MIRACLE.”**

**IN HIS OUTSTANDING BOOK ABOUT MIRACLES, LEWIS SAYS IT’S THE INCARNATION – GOD COMING TO EARTH IN THE PERSON OF THE BABY JESUS, BORN IN BETHLEHEM – THAT IS THE “GRAND MIRACLE” OF ALL MIRACLES.**

**EVERY MIRACLE JESUS PERFORMED – EVERY MIRACLE THAT WE READ IN THE PAGES OF SCRIPTURE – EVERY MIRACLE THAT HAS**

**EVER TAKEN PLACE – FINDS ITS MEANING IN THE EVENT WE CELEBRATE TONIGHT.**

**LEWIS SAYS, “EVERY OTHER MIRACLE PREPARES FOR THIS OR EXHIBITS THIS, OR RESULTS FROM THIS.**

**THE FITNESS, AND THEREFORE CREDIBILITY, OF THE PARTICULAR MIRACLES DEPENDS ON THEIR RELATION TO THE GRAND MIRACLE; ALL DISCUSSION OF THEM IN ISOLATION FROM IT IS FUTILE.”**

**ALL THE MIRACLES AND, INDEED, ALL THE MOMENTS OF LIFE FIND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE IN THIS ONE – THE MIRACLE & THE MOMENT THAT THE GUY ON THE ROOF SLEPT RIGHT THROUGH.**

**AGAIN, THOUGH, WE NEEDN'T BE CRITICAL OF THE GUY ON THE ROOF.**

**IT'S THE GUY ON THE ROOF WHO COULD LEGITIMATELY BE MUCH MORE CRITICAL OF US FOR OUR LACK OF RESPONSE TO THE GRAND MIRACLE THAT TOOK PLACE THAT NIGHT.**

**WE HAVE 2,000 YEARS OF HISTORY & OUR OWN DAILY EXPERIENCE OF THE INCARNATION THAT SHOULD SHAKE US FROM OUR SLUMBER.**

**WHAT ARE THE MOMENTS OF YOUR LIFE WHEN THE INCARNATION BECOMES REAL FOR YOU?**

**YOU SEE, *THOSE* ARE THE MOMENTS WE NEED TO BE SURE WE DON'T SLEEP THROUGH.**

**WE NEED TO BE OPEN TO THE MANNER IN WHICH THE EXTRAORDINARY TAKES PLACE IN THE ORDINARINESS OF DAILY LIFE.**

**ONE OF THOSE MOMENTS FOR ME TOOK PLACE MORE THAN 30 YEARS AGO.**

**MY FATHER HAD DIED & I WAS AWAY FROM THE CHURCH I WAS SERVING DURING THAT WEEK.**

**AS I RETURNED, I HAD A NUMBER OF SYMPATHY CARDS & FOLKS WHO CAME BY THE OFFICE TO OFFER THEIR SUPPORT.**

**WALKING OUT OF CHURCH THAT FIRST SUNDAY BACK, ONE PERSON AFTER ANOTHER OFFERED HEARTFELT WORDS OF COMFORT AND CONDOLENCE.**

**I CAN'T SAY THAT I SPECIFICALLY REMEMBER ANY OF THOSE CARDS OR ANY OF THOSE WORDS.**

**BUT THERE WAS A MAN NAMED BILL RICHARDS WHO WAS IN CHURCH THAT DAY.**

**BILL WAS A KIND, QUIET & GENEROUS SOUL BUT NOT SOMEONE I REALLY KNEW VERY WELL.**

**AS BILL WALKED PAST ME, HE SIMPLY LOOKED INTO MY EYES AND GENTLY TOUCHED ME ON THE SHOULDER.**

**AT THE TIME, I DON'T THINK I WOULD HAVE DREAMED THAT MORE THAN 30 YEARS LATER I WOULD STILL REMEMBER THAT MOMENT, BUT I DO.**

**IT WAS A MOMENT THAT MADE THE INCARNATION MORE REAL TO ME THAN ANYTHING ELSE POSSIBLY COULD.**

**IT WAS A MOMENT WHEN I FELT THE EXTRAORDINARY IN THE ORDINARINESS OF DAILY LIFE.**

**ON THIS NIGHT, WE CELEBRATE WHAT LITERALLY HAPPENED IN BETHLEHEM 2,000 YEARS AGO.**

**WE CELEBRATE AN ACTUAL HISTORICAL EVENT THAT TOOK PLACE RIGHT BENEATH THE GUY ON THE ROOF.**

**WHILE THE GUY ON THE ROOF MAY NOT REALLY HAVE BEEN THERE – MARY, JOSEPH, JESUS & THE SHEPHERDS SURELY WERE – AND EVEN THE WISE MEN SHORTLY THEREAFTER.**

**BUT THAT EVENT ISN'T CONFINED TO BETHLEHEM.**

**IT ISN'T CONFINED TO A SPECIFIC MOMENT IN HISTORY.**

**IT'S AN EVENT & A MOMENT THAT CONTINUES TO TAKE PLACE EVERY DAY.**

**THE INCARNATION IS REAL – GOD, IN THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST, HAS ENTERED OUR WORLD & TOUCHES OUR LIVES EVERY SINGLE DAY.**

**DON'T SLEEP THROUGH THOSE MOMENTS IN YOUR OWN LIFE & BE SURE NOT TO SLEEP THROUGH THOSE MOMENTS WHEN YOU HAVE THE CAPACITY TO TOUCH THE LIFE OF ANOTHER.**

**IT'S IN THE ORDINARINESS OF LIFE THAT EXTRAORDINARY THINGS HAPPEN. AMEN.**

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