



## Christ Our Savior

**Christian Life Center, Rev. Tim VanCleave**

Luke 2:11 says, "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord." Jesus was born as our Savior. What does "Savior" mean, and why is He called "Savior?" What did He come to save us from?

We are all born into sin which means a broken relationship with God. Jesus came to save us from the guilt of sin. Jesus came so we could once again be restored back to perfect fellowship with God just like it was in the beginning of mankind.

I know and have met many people who know about God or who believe in God. Some are even very religious, but they don't have a personal relationship with Him. Many people do not know how to fill that empty spot they feel inside, or how to have true purpose in life. They don't know how to deal with the guilt of sin. They have not figured out how to experience God's forgiveness.

I can tell you how. Invite the Lord Jesus Christ into your life as Lord and Savior. Let Him run your life and you'll never be happier. The Bible says that Jesus came to seek and save the lost. If we don't have Him at the controls of our life, then we are lost. It doesn't matter how much money we have, how many things we have or don't have, or how high our status is in society. If we don't have Jesus in our life we're lost and missing out on the best thing we could ever hope for. That's what Christmas is all about; a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Why not receive the greatest gift of Christmas, Jesus Christ? You'll never be the same again.

## Christmas Message

**United Methodist Church, Rev. Bob Dowrey**

I enjoy singing and hearing Christmas carols. They bring to us the real meaning and spirit of Christmas. Their main purpose is for their message to last all year.

I heard of a minister who wanted to do something different. So he had a service in mid-July where the only hymns sung were Christmas carols. The people found it hard to get used to this "out of season" use of carols, even though the messages were true.

The truth of the carols' messages shouldn't hinder us from grasping their main point even if they are sung "out of season". There is no "out of season" for God's love and mercy to us, which is what the carols are all about.

And never forget to appreciate them, their authors, and 'the supreme author'. Even if we feel saturated with carols at this time of year, and may say "ho hum," and may yawn when we hear them, continue to search for the message and look for the true story behind the song.

May God bless you and yours this season.

## All Saints Episcopal Church

**The Rev. Al Miller**

Have you ever watched closely a man whose first child has just been born, especially a man who works with his hands for a living? The first time he touches the baby is a spectacular moment. Those big rough hands gently and with great concentration hold "the most precious being ever to enter the world." In a moment, the man's world is transformed. There is indeed a sense of wonder and awe. This is a moment without time, and yet it passes fleetingly.

We live in a world where the fast pace of our lives so seldom gives us occasion to indulge ourselves of such awe filling moments as that which was just described. We live with calendars, time pieces, cellular phones, computers, fax machines and the like. It is possible to fill every moment with entertainment, noise, household chores, and the pursuit of financial success. Yet, I would say, when reflecting back upon my own moments of awe and wonder, that they are well remembered. The fast-paced, task-oriented, every minute-filled routines of daily living soon fade into oblivion.

Moments of wonder and awe are transforming. They remind us of our limited nature, and therefore they are also feared by us. They pronounce that there is much going on in this world which is far bigger, far deeper and far more reaching that we can control or imagine. Such moments free us from control and are thus opportunities for change. Such a moment is the celebration of the birth of a baby. Such a moment is the celebration of the birth of THE baby.

Christmas is still celebrated by so many people because we long for moments which free us. God is freeing. The freely chosen gift of "loving us so much as to come into our world and free us from all those controlling and often empty moments" is the awesome wonder of God at Christmas. A baby enters the world, and it is forever changed. A normal event with extraordinary ramifications.

You see, we really need wonder and awe. They are at the very heart of what it means to be human. No other creature appears to be capable of such a reaction as this. Jesus is indeed the bearer of this gift. Christmas is the season of wonder and awe. Most of us indeed take time to let go of control, to remember that God's world and God's ways are bigger than we are. We indeed yearn for the transformation promised in the One who was born in a stable. Come join those who worship Christ this Christmas. Be prepared for wonder and awe. May you be touched by God.

## Begotten in Us

**United Church of Christ, Rev. Lea Mathieu**

One spiritual challenge of the Christmas season is to look beyond nostalgia or remembrance in order to find the present and future truth that Immanuel-EI: God is indeed with us.

The astounding Incarnation of God-made-human calls us to incarnate God through our own lives by the power of the indwelling Spirit and the eternal Christ.

Meister Eckhart, a 13th century theologian, posed the questions and the challenge well: "What good is it to me if this eternal birth of the divine Son takes place unceasingly but does not take place within myself? And, what good is it to me if Mary is full of grace and if I am not also full of grace? What good is it to me for the Creator to give birth to his Son if I do not also give birth to Him in my time and in my culture? This, then, is the fullness of time: When the Son of God is "begotten in us." Amen.

# The Spirit of Christmas

## "Twas the Night Before"

**Lexington Baptist, Pastor Glen Anderson**

Reflections are what we see and for some what they don't want to see. As the Christmas season comes many of us reflect back on the nativity and the serenity of that scene. With this poem, I hope many will reflect upon the implications of the future scene, as well.

'Twas the night before Jesus came and all through the house, not a creature was praying, not one in the house. Their bibles were lain on the shelf without care, in hopes that Christ Jesus would not show up here.

The children were dressing to crawl into bed, not once ever kneeling or bowing a head. Mom in her rocker with the babe on her lap was watching the late show while I took a nap.

When out of the East there arose such a clatter, I sprang to my feet to see what was the matter. Away to the window I flew like a flash, tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.

When what to my wondering eyes should appear, but angels proclaiming that Jesus was here. With a light like the sun sending forth a bright ray, I knew in a moment that this must be THE DAY.

The light of His face made me cover my head. It was Jesus returning just like He said. And though I possessed worldly wisdom and wealth, I cried when I saw Him in spite of myself.

In the great Book of Life which He held in His hand, was written the name of every saved man. He spoke not a word as He searched for my name; when He said "It's not here," my head hung in shame.

The people whose names had been written with love, He gathered to take to His Father above. With those who were ready, He rose without a sound, while all of the rest were left standing around.

I fell to my knees, but it was too late; I had waited too long, and thus sealed my fate. I stood and I cried as they rose out of sight; If only I had been ready tonight.

In the words of this poem the meaning is clear, the coming of Jesus is drawing quite near. There's only one life and when comes the last call, we'll find that the Bible was true after all.

Author Unknown

## Christmas Message

**St. Patrick Catholic Church, Fr. Gerry Condon**

O'Henry wrote many interesting stories. He has a story that is very appropriate for this season. It is about a young married couple named Della and Jim. They lived in a small, furnished New York flat.

They did not own much. Jim's small salary went to pay for the apartment, the groceries and other incidentals. The day before Christmas, Della only had \$1.87 with which to buy Jim a gift. She really wanted to get him a platinum chain for his pocket watch which was his pride and joy. It had belonged to his father and grandfather. She wondered how she could get the chain for him.

Suddenly, she had an idea. Her only possession of great value was her hair. It was beautiful, long brown hair that fell in ripples all the way to her knees. She was proud of her hair, and Jim loved it. So she decided to sell it to Madame Sofronie, a seller of wigs and hair goods. Madame Sofronie paid her \$20, and so Della was able to buy the platinum watch chain.

When Jim came home from work on Christmas Eve, he couldn't believe his eyes when he saw Della. When he asked her about her hair, she told him she had sold it to buy his Christmas gift. He then took a package out of his pocket, and gave it to her. It was a set of pure tortoise shell combs with jeweled rims. She had seen these in a store window, and yearned for them. They were for her hair--the hair she had sold.

Then she gave him his gift, the watch chain. He smiled as he looked at it. It was then that he told her: "I sold my watch to get the money so I could buy you the combs. They laughed and hugged as their hearts were filled with joy. They had each received the gifts they wanted the most--each other.

As we approach Christmas it is good to be aware that we are celebrating a birthday, the birthday of Jesus. He comes to us with love, but we sometimes become too engrossed with things. This is a time to put our values in order, to be aware that people are more important than things. Let us offer the gift of ourselves to our Savior: the gift of a will that serves Him, and a heart that loves Him.

## What If?

**Seventh-Day Adventist, Pastor Perry Melnychenko**

Have you ever wondered, "What if...?" What if there was no Christmas?

I'm not talking about Christmas trees, ornaments, busy shopping malls and the likes. What I mean is, what if Christ never came. What if God didn't "so love the world that He gave us His Son," what would the world be like? More likely, would there even be a world to live in?

Every day we are assaulted by headlines reporting the latest atrocities in the world. It seems there's no place to run. No community, however quaint, is immune. And yet, we need to realize that if Christ hadn't come, the reports we hear on a daily basis would be only the "tip of the iceberg."

In the hustle and bustle of the season we can become so consumed with "Christmases" that we miss the meaning entirely. The good news is that the question of "What if..." need not be asked, because God did "so love the world that He gave us His Son". A Son who came and died for us to provide the ultimate cure for the ails of the world we live in. A Son who promises to return again to put an end forever to depressing headlines by taking us to a home He's prepared for us.

This Christmas, why not place Christ at the top of your wish list. Appliances break down, the latest and greatest gadget you just can't live without is soon replaced by a new and improved model, and even the most sought after toy is set aside before the needles fall off the tree. But Jesus takes on greater meaning every day that we allow Him to be a part of our life; and the "gifts" He brings never fade.

My prayer is that this Christmas may bring to each one joy, peace and safety. And more importantly, that it may bring you closer to the One who makes this day and every day possible, Jesus Christ.

## Let There Be Light

**Hope-Valby Lutheran, Rev. Stan Hoobing**

Christmas would just not be Christmas without lights. As far back as I remember there were lights at Christmas--white lights, colored lights on Christmas trees, on houses, in store windows, businesses and yard displays.

God likes lights too. In the beginning when the earth was without form and void, God said, "Let there be light", and light appeared and God was very pleased. God has since been creating light in the deep dark places of the world. God's first lights were like Fourth of July fireworks, powerful and bright, but all too soon gone and

easily forgotten. These first lights, Moses, Samuel, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zachariah and Malachi, offered rays of hope, but as the brilliance faded, so did the hope of the people.

But not for God. God went to work a long time ago in the hills of Judea near Bethlehem to create a new light. At first it was just a glimmer, but then steadily and slowly it grew in intensity and brilliance. One observer of this light recorded these words, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Later another observer recorded these words: "I am the light of the world, whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life", John 8:12.

We live in a world full of brilliant, dazzling lights which we have created. They light up our houses, our streets, sidewalks, businesses and shopping malls. They have rearranged and enhanced our patterns of living.

This Light of Life which God has created and given to us--Jesus the Christ--he is the light, we alone adore and celebrate. Amidst all the dazzling lights, only this light is the everlasting light that can save us from the deep darkness that threatens us.

## What You See Is What You Get

**First Christian Church, Roger Scharen**

On many occasions Jesus talked about people who have eyes but do not really see. They only see on the surface of things while the real meaning passes them by.

The Gospel writer Mark records for us in chapter 8, verse 18 these words: "Having eyes do you not see and having ears do you not hear?"

Have you ever stopped to consider, of all the people who must have come by to see the Christ Child in the manger, only a few really saw Him and were able to perceive the meaning of the event. There must have been many people who came to see the baby because what new baby doesn't attract attention? But only a few looked at him through the eyes of faith, and that made the difference.

We are told the shepherds went away glorifying God for all they had seen. They were simple uneducated shepherds but they saw through the eyes of faith. How much of this season do you think our people really see and experience? Some people receive so much more from life because they see more; they see more than just the surface things.

It was Helen Keller who wrote about people who "have the sunrise and the sunset, the purple of the distant hills, yet go through this enchanted world with nothing but a barren stare." What we see is what we get. What we see has a great deal to do with what we are.

## Have A Mary Christmas

**Church of Nazarene, Rev. Larry Benjamin**

Do you remember the story of Mary and Martha in Luke 2:38-42? Martha was the head of this house. She may have been a widow whose husband left her with the house and a means of support. Perhaps Mary, Martha and Lazarus were living in the house they had inherited from their parents. Because Martha was the oldest, she would have been recognized as the head of the house. Either way, they were close friends with Jesus, and she opened her home up to Him.

When Jesus dropped in (probably unannounced), Martha busied herself preparing a meal and possibly making accommodations for their overnight stay.

Then there was Mary. Mary had probably started out helping Martha, but had gotten caught up in listening to Jesus, and had forgotten what she was doing. Luke tells us that she was sitting at the feet of Jesus. "Sitting at the feet" was a phrase used to describe teacher and pupil, a setting where a person was learning from a master. Or she could have been literally sitting at Jesus' feet.

I think what is important to note here, is that Martha is so busy doing things that she felt needed to be done, that she is missing a chance to talk and listen to her Lord.

Are we so busy doing the things we feel must be done during the Christmas season, that we forget to take time to spend with Jesus? Are we too busy decorating our house, buying the perfect gifts, and making the best meal anyone has ever had to remember that Jesus is the reason for the season? I would like to challenge you this year, to have a Mary Christmas. Spend time with Jesus and don't worry so much about the physical preparations.

## Christmas church services

**St. Patrick and St. William Catholic Church**

A candlelight procession and Vigil Mass with Christmas carols will begin at 8 p.m. on Christmas Eve, Dec. 24 at St. Patrick Catholic Church in Heppner.

Christmas day Mass with Christmas carols will be held at 8:45 a.m. at St. William's Catholic Church in Ione and at 11 a.m. at St. Patrick's.

**All Saints Episcopal**

All Saints Episcopal Church will celebrate Christmas with a service on Friday, Dec. 24 at 7 p.m. Worship will start with the singing of Christmas carols. A festive service of Holy Communion will follow. There will be a children's homily and a Christmas sermon for adults. All people are invited to share in this blessed occasion, said the Rev. Al Miller.

Sunday, Dec. 26, a celebration of Christmastide will be held at 10:30 a.m. Christian education and Bible study will begin at 9:30 a.m. for all ages. Child care is provided.

**United Methodist**

A Christmas Eve service will be held Friday, Dec. 24 at 7 p.m. at the Methodist Church, complete with Christmas carols.

The choir, directed by Geneva

Mathews, will sing "No Candle Was There". The public is invited to attend.

**Hope-Valby Lutheran**

Christmas Eve carols, candlelight and communion service will be celebrated Christmas eve, Dec. 24, at 6 p.m. at Hope Lutheran church and at Valby Lutheran at 9 p.m. The congregation will sing Christmas carols. Special music will be provided by children of the congregation and Rachel Hoobing.

"A String of Lights", a sermon based on scripture reading of St. John 1:1-14, will be given by Pastor Stan Hoobing.

The outside walkway to the churches will be lit with special Christmas candles pointing the way to the manger of Bethlehem where the Christ child was born.

Rachel Hoobing, a third-year biology major at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, WA, will deliver the sermon Sunday, Dec. 26 the Feast of St. Stephen's Day. The service will begin at 9 a.m. at Valby and at 11 a.m. at Hope Lutheran church.

The Hoobings will host an open house following worship service at the Lutheran parsonage from 12 noon to 7 p.m. for members and friends of the Hope-Valby Lutheran Parish.