

Christmas Eve, December 24, 2020, Year B

St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Douglas GA

The Rev. Fr. John E. Commins+ Rector

Scripture: Luke 2:1-20

“What if Jesus Were Not Born?”

The other night – Marilyn and I decided to take a ‘time out’ from the Hallmark Channel, and watched the old Christmas Classic – “It’s a Wonderful Life.” I got to thinking as George Bailey was shown what the world would be like if he had not been born, I started to think what the world might be like if Jesus had not been born. The conclusion I came to was quite unsettling.

Well, we most certainly would not be here tonight – with nothing in common and certainly nothing to celebrate. Saint Andrew’s would not be here – and this building would not have had a reason to be built in 1939 as St. Paul’s Roman Catholic Church because there would be no Roman Catholic Church. There would be no St. Andrew, St. Paul, St. Peter, St. John – none of them would have been important because they never would have met Jesus – since He was not there. The words Christian and Christianity would have never existed – and many of the social changes, medical enhancements, and additions that have come about through the ages through the Christians might not have ever happened. I get the feeling that there would be a gaping hole in the world as we know it.

There would be no missionaries to ever bring a message that would not have existed – a Gospel that held no “good news.” I have to wonder what the religious makeup of the world would be. There would have been no Crusades to protect the “Holy Land” and therefore Islam probably would have overrun the Middle East by leaps and bounds. The choices would have most likely been to be a Jew or a Roman Gentile or some other kind of Pagan. Think about it -what would your religious background be? As I said – it is somewhat unsettling.

There would be no fulfillment of the many prophesies that foretold the virgin birth of God’s Anointed Messiah. We would have no New Testament – because there would have been no miracles, parables, or teachings of Jesus. Isaiah 53 is rich with prophesies of the ‘suffering servant’ that would not yet be fulfilled and the world would still be awaiting His coming. There would be no Holy Communion, or sacrifice on the cross – that would bring forgiveness of sins, and restoration and reconciliation of a relationship with Yahweh, God the Father. Since there was no crucifixion and death of Jesus – there would be no glorious resurrection on the third day from the borrowed tomb – and certainly no hope of resurrection for any of us as well.

There would be no opportunity for a personal relationship with God, through the Holy Spirit, because there would have been no tearing of the Temple veil upon Jesus’ last breath. It would certainly cause a sense of aloneness in the world with no means of spiritual guidance other than what we can supply for “ourselves.”

Would there even have been a middle ages, or industrial revolution bringing people to cities, and a desire to grow beyond medieval life? Would the “New World” have even been found since for the most part those people were in search of religious freedoms from persecution.

Take a look at our own family trees – how would they be shaped differently – and because of that would we even be here? To be sure, our lives would be vastly different.

But the truth is - He was born and every one of those magnificent prophesies have come true. Jesus did meet the Apostles and He did preach the truth, leading to His crucifixion, death, and resurrection – allowing us to know that believing in Him brings us to everlasting life with Him. He gave us the Holy Spirit, who makes a personal relationship possible with Almighty God - feeling His love, mercy, and compassion when we repent and ask for His forgiveness.

When Jesus of Nazareth was born in Bethlehem, He split time in two – BC and AD, and allowing those of us who are called Christians to acknowledge and cherish the rich Holy Scripture and tradition from the Old Testament – all of the way from Genesis to Malachi, and our Jewish heritage, from Abraham to today.

We sing tonight and celebrate the magnificent miracle of His birth, the angels announcing His coming, and the shepherds getting the opportunity to witness the simplicity of the manger where He lay. Do you know what a manger is? A feeding trough. Our Lord left a throne in heaven to come down and lay on hay in a feeding trough. He loves you that much!

I could go on and on – because there is so much more to say – but I need to let the words of a sermon that was preached on July 11, 1926 by Dr. James Allan Francis say the rest. He spoke these words:

“He was born in an obscure village, the son of a peasant woman.

He grew up in another village, where he worked in a carpenter's shop until he was thirty. Then for three years he became a wandering preacher.

He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family or owned a house. He didn't go to college. He never visited a big city. He never travelled two hundred miles from the place where he was born. He did none of those things one usually associates with greatness.

He had no credentials but himself.

He was only thirty-three when the tide of public opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. He was turned over to his enemies and went through a mockery of a trial. He was executed by the state. While he was dying, his executioners gambled for his clothing, the only property he had on earth. When he was dead he was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend.

Twenty centuries have come and gone, and today he is the central figure of the human race and the leader of mankind's progress. All the armies that ever marched, all the navies that

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*ever sailed, all the parliaments that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man on this earth - as much as that **One Solitary Life.***"

(This was a sermon delivered by Dr. James Allan Francis, D. D. on July 11, 1926 (1864–1928))