



**“Wonder FULL”**

**Christmas Eve**

Tuesday, December 24, 2019  
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Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

Isaiah 9:2-7; Luke 2:1-20

Grace and peace be to you from our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

“Behold a new and wondrous mystery.” So begins the Christmas of St. John Chrysostom, a 4<sup>th</sup> century Archbishop of Constantinople. Is that what it feels like for us today? “A new and wondrous mystery.”

Is this Christmas, the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ “new and wondrous” for you? I don’t know about you, but I notice Christmas music has been playing since just after Halloween. The same with the Christmas decorations in the store, and if I eat another Christmas cookie, I am going to burst!

Maybe the more that we know about something, the less we care. I mean we’ve all heard the story of Jesus’s birth over and over again. We all know about the star, and the shepherds, and the angels, and the baby lying in a manger. We’re saturated with Christmas. Have we become indifferent to what is happening in this story about the birth of the Messiah?

Now there are some people who want to dispense with the Jesus’ birth story and literally throw the baby out with the bath water, or at least the baby out with the stable, and celebrate an all-purpose “happy holidays.” A holiday devoid of meaning other than being generically happy! Now that is a solution, but does it really fill our souls with gladness? Does it acknowledge love’s pure light?

Former UN Secretary General Dag Hammerskjold said years ago, “If spiritual things become a drag and the message of Christmas is dull you can be sure the problem is not in the message but in your loss of awe and wonder at the message.”

For us to really experience Christmas and all that it represents we must recapture the wonder and the awe of the message.

Now if you look in the dictionary the word “wonder” can be used as a noun, it’s a feeling of surprise mingled with admiration, caused by something beautiful, unexpected, unfamiliar, or inexplicable. Used as a verb, wonder means to desire to know something, to be curious.

Now whether you look at it as a noun or a verb, this word “wonder” captures what God is about, what God is seeking to evoke in us at Christmas. The beautiful unexpected mysterious loving action of our God to kindle faith and hope in our lives.

You and I don't create wonder. We don't create mystery. Instead we open ourselves up to it, open ourselves up to the experience of it, and it touches us and envelopes us.

Wonder is embracing mystery for its own sake. It's a passionate search for the things of God, like those first shepherds and wise men who sought out Jesus at the first Christmas.

In the Bible there are over 365 names and inscriptions referring to Jesus Christ, and there is none that is more beautiful than the one that's found in the Prophet Isaiah (9.6) "He is named wonderful..."

Wonder can't be tamed or restrained, weighed or measured, it can't be reasoned with or dissected. Wonder is always unfinished, always emerging, always revealing. In its deepest sense wonder connects us to life itself; and that's why we wonder at a beautiful mountain view, we wonder at a stunning sunrise, we wonder at the birth of a child.

The first Christmas sermon preached by the angels was "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."

This invitation of the angels is for us to enter into that wonder and mystery of the God made flesh. God is not indifferent to our world or our lives. In the incarnation, Jesus takes on flesh, the divine becomes human, so that you and I might know God.

A Savior is born to give light and love, and forgiveness and grace, faith and hope to generation after generation. A holy mystery that can't be explained to any one satisfaction, but it can only be experienced and upon that experience then can only be sung about. That's why we sing Christmas carols ancient and new about the wonder of God's love for us in sending Jesus.

Wonder is that place where reality meets holy mystery.

It's a gift that continues today, a living wonder that unites families and peoples and has us pause to reflect on the goodness of God and the peace this child brings.

Where that message is taught and preached and celebrated wonder things still happen. Jesus Christ is born anew in each one of us.

Wonder is like the light of a candle. It must be shared and multiplied or else the wonder dies out over time. Yet touched with another wick it grows, and the wonder expands, love is strengthened, and peace reigns.

For you who seek truth, for you who seek God, for you who long for peace...

Come be filled with the wonder of Jesus Christ.

Open your hearts to receive Christmas joy and blessings of the Christ child born in Bethlehem.

Sing songs of salvation and love and peace come near.

Joined with Christ, find wonder in everyday conversations; love and care for neighbor and creation.

And to paraphrase John Chrysostom in that same Christmas sermon 1600 years ago:

*Come, then, let us observe the Feast. Truly wondrous is the whole story of the Nativity. For this day the ancient slavery is ended, the devil*

*confounded, the demons take to flight, the power of death is broken, paradise is unlocked, the curse is taken away, sin is removed from us, error driven out, truth has been brought back, the speech of kindness is shared and spreads everywhere, and a heavenly way of life has been planted on earth.*

May you and yours be filled with the wonder and the awe and the joy of Christmas. Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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