

WHERE THE LORD WAS BORN

Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss

Reading: Luke 2:1-14

Why do you think the Lord born in a manger, in a stable in Bethlehem? You would have thought that was the last place that the King of all the earth would be born. He was greater than any king, greater than all kings put together. Why wasn't He born in the most beautiful and rich palace there was? At least, why was He not born in a special place, somewhere that all the important people could find Him?

And why were the shepherds the first people to see Him? After all, the shepherds were not important people. They weren't rich; they weren't learned and clever; they didn't even know how to read and write. Why didn't the Lord send His angel to the kings of the land and to the rulers? Why didn't He at least send His angels to the ministers, the priests—to the high priest, who was supposed to be a holy man? Instead, the Lord sent the angels to the simple, humble shepherds.

The Lord didn't tell the kings and the priests that He had been born because they wouldn't have been interested. Isn't that sad? They wouldn't have cared. They weren't good men. Many of them were very wicked men. They didn't care for the Lord. They cared for themselves and weren't interested in anything but their own happiness.

Take the kings. If they had been told that the King of all the earth had come, would they have been excited and thrilled, like the shepherds were? Not at all. They would have wanted to kill the Lord, because they would have been afraid of Him, afraid that He would take their kingdoms away. Isn't that the way Herod was? Didn't he try his hardest to kill the Lord?

And take the priests. You would have thought they would have been thrilled to see the Lord on earth. But they wouldn't have been. Many of them were turning to evil and teaching people wrong things, so that they could grow rich and do bad things in secret. They didn't want to hear that the Lord had come to show them up for the evil people they were. In any case, they weren't interested in the Lord. We are told that if an angel had come to them, like Gabriel came to the shepherds, and if the heavenly host of angels had sung to them, they wouldn't have been thrilled. They would have decided it was some trick. They would have said in their hearts that it wasn't important. They would never have gone to Bethlehem to see this thing which had come to pass. They only cared for themselves.

But how different the shepherds were. They *were* thrilled! They were afraid of the angels, but excited at what they were told. And they went with haste, quickly, to see the baby Jesus. And when they had seen Him, they came back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had seen and heard.

The shepherds were good people, simple and quiet. The Lord could send His angel to them because they would listen and obey and give thanks. But the angel did not go to the rich and the strong because they did not trust in the Lord, but in themselves. They felt they didn't need the Lord, even though they pretended they did.

And what about us, today? Let us be honest. As Christmas time comes around, each year, isn't there a part inside of our minds that is like the kings and the evil priests? Isn't there a part of us that pretends to be excited about the Lord, but really secretly doesn't care about Him at all? When Christmas comes, isn't there a part of us that secretly says, "I don't care about the Lord. I want the other things of Christmas, I want presents, and good food, and parties, and more presents. I don't really care about the stories about Christmas, but I'll listen to them and get them over with."

There's a part of us that would like us to forget about the Lord, and pretends that it's not important at all that He was born on earth.

But then there's a part of us which is like the shepherds, too. There's a part that really is excited to hear those wonderful stories about the tiny baby, and the people who saw Him. There's a part that is thrilled and full of wonder, as we watch the tableaux or pageants, and see the pictures which tell what it was like on that holy night so long, long ago.

That is what is wonderful! There is a part of us that makes us not want to care, and not want to think of any part of Christmas but the selfish part. But the Lord has made a part of us like the shepherds, too—a simple, good, gentle part, which is thrilled and excited with the stories of His coming. The Lord sends His angel to that part of our minds and says, "The Lord your Savior has been born on earth. This is the most wonderful thing that has ever happened. Come and worship Him, and learn to do all the things He tells you, and you will be saved." Each one of us must push away the selfish side, and learn to listen to the angel, and then go, to find the Lord where He has been born.

Amen.