

**A Peanuts Christmas
Luke 2**

For a number of years, our music directors have asked me to revisit my Charlie Brown Christmas message. Bugging me year after year after year after year, and since they are retiring next summer, I figured THIS was the year!



Nine years ago, when Westminster’s music and worship staff met to discuss Christmas Eve worship and where we were going for the bulletins, a theme, music, etc. – I handed my colleagues a draft of the Christmas Eve bulletin with the Charlie Brown nativity picture on the front.

In keeping with the season – a very pregnant hush fell over the group – “...not a creature was stirring...”; not a word was spoken. VERY uncommon for THAT group.

Finally, one of them ventured to question my sanity. “Don – I’m just not sure about the Charlie Brown picture. I’m not sure I’d use that.”

Immediately, someone else piled on, “I agree. There are going to be people here who expect something sacred; something more holy than.... uh.... Woodstock in the manger.” Nods around the room showed unanimous consent, although one of them, probably concerned for the underwhelming response their boss had received, finally said, “It IS kinda cute.”

Never fear, I had just gotten started. “Well,” I said, “I’m tired of all this ‘*Jesus is the reason for the season*,’ stuff. Because it’s **NOT** about Jesus!”

A look of respectful horror appeared on every face in the room. In that moment I think some, like Mary, were pondering in their heart how they could quietly dismiss the head of staff from his preaching responsibilities on Christmas Eve, and substitute another member of the team for the evening’s meditation.

But before a coup could be organized, I continued. “It’s **NOT** about Jesus. If it were about Jesus, we’d have the King of Kings seated on a throne, angel choruses singing Lord of Lords, and trumpets announcing the Prince of Peace who rules the world. This is NOT about Jesus!”

“For unto **US** a child is born; unto **US** a Son is given. Unto **YOU** is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. Peace on earth, good will toward **ALL PEOPLE.**” It’s about **US**. If it were all about Jesus, he’d have stayed in heaven at the

right hand of God. But He didn't. God condescended to become flesh for 33 years, because it's about you and me – about us!

It's about Mary, a young peasant girl. It's about Joseph, a man with a small business in woodworking. It's about a handful of blue-collar guys outside town shepherding their livelihood from pasture to pasture. It's about King Herod, who despite his power is consumed with concern he might have competition for his throne.

It's about a trio of wise-guys in the East – astrologers – mixing science and horoscopes together and passing themselves off as consultants of the universe. It's about the innkeeper, whose gracious offer of a stable is an act of kindness and hospitality, despite the fact he doesn't have a clue what's about to happen in his backyard. It's about all the US's in that story in Luke!

But.....it's also about all the US's in THIS story, too.

It's about Charlie Brown – the round-faced, bald-headed kid who never kicks the football, who stands alone in the rain on the pitcher's mound, who can't keep his kite out of the tree.

A lovable loser, a child possessed of endless determination and hope, but who is ultimately dominated by his insecurities, a permanent case of bad luck, and often **bullied by his peers**. It's about Charlie Brown and all the young men who feel like him.

It's about Lucy – the opinionated, self-appointed psychiatrist of the world; an eternal fussbudget, who every now and then reveals she too has a heart that breaks – but who fears if she lets on, she'll melt away. A woman whose crush of affection – whose undying love – is never returned by introverted, socially inept, piano-playing Schroeder, who **pretends** his only love is Beethoven.

It's about every Lucy whose love is scorned, and every Schroeder who is so wonderfully gifted but doesn't know how to relate to others.

It's about Linus – whose security is in his precious blue blanket; like all of us who hold tightly to what comforts us – the dollars in our portfolio; a bottle of vodka; our youthful good looks; our Facebook page, or the waning love of children who have moved on in life. It's about Linus, and everyone who loves him, because so many of us have known at some point in life what it's like to **BE** him.

It's about Sally Brown – every Charlie's little sister. The innocent ones among us who never get center stage, whose polka dot dress is like a personal set of angel wings, whose cherub-like sweetness never fully comprehends everything happening around her. It's about all the Sally's you and I know and how mean the world can be to them. It's about Pigpen – the little guy enveloped in a cloud of dirt which follows him wherever he goes. In his case it's literal dirt – but in your case or my case, perhaps it's a history we cannot change; secrets in our past that few if any but God ever know about; mistakes made, soiled relationships, muddy choices that not even all the bleach in the

world can un-stain. It's about Pigpen, and all of us surrounded by the messes we cannot shake.

This birth is not about Jesus. It's about us. It's about God coming to be **WITH** us, to be **FOR** us, even consenting to **BE US**, in order to love us, in order to show us the depth of God's grace and mercy, in order to heal us, in order to cleanse us, and in order to save us.

Mary and Joseph, shepherds and king Herod; innkeepers and accountants, managers and wayward children, drug addicts and presidents, and even and especially Charlie Brown. Because **they all – WE all** – need a Savior.

In 1965, when CBS executives first previewed "A Charlie Brown Christmas" they were vastly underwhelmed. There was SO MUCH wrong with it.

There was not enough action. It moved too slowly. The voices were done by real kids, not adult actors. There was no laugh track. It had jazz music in the background. But to top it off, it included a Bible reading. The network blockheads were certain that viewers would not want to sit through a reading from the Gospel of Luke from the King James Bible; it was just too religious.

Charles Schultz, the creator of Peanuts, wouldn't budge. "If we don't tell the true meaning of Christmas, who will?" he demanded.

(VIDEO OF LINUS RECITING LUKE 2).

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

That's what Christmas is all about Charlie Brown. You and me.

It's about us.

Christmas began in the heart of God. It is complete only when it reaches the hearts of men, women and children like us. Unto **US** is born this night a savior. To **US**. All of us. Blockheads, Schroeders, Lucys, Sallys. To us. Everyone of us. Because He loves **US!**

Thanks be to God. AMEN.