

St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church-WELS
Devotion by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz
December 24, 2010 Christmas Eve
Trinity Saint Luke's Children's Service



¹⁰And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. ¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. ¹²And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

My right rear brake light on my 2002 Envoy is burned out! Do you know how to fix it? You have to open the tail gate. This reveals two small Philips screws. If you remove those screws – the plastic cover comes loose. Tucked into this large red and orange plastic wedge are these black plastic plugs. Twist – then pull these plugs loose – and you have the bulb. You can tell the burned out one – because it's black – and the little filaments are broken inside. Take the old bulb out. Get the new bulb out of the package – don't touch the glass part with your fingers! If you do – you get the oil from your skin on the bulb – and when it gets hot – it will pop! Do you believe that? That's what I was told! I hope you didn't touch it! Push and twist the plug back into the plastic wedge. *Test it!* Have someone step on the brake. Does it light up? Then put the wedge back in place – put the two little screws back in. Shut the tail gate! That all works in my head! Will it work on my car? I don't know! I have *book* learning! I have gone to school for a long time – sat in a desk and read lots of books. But none of that helps – when your brake light burns out! It doesn't! And if I can't be sure I can fix the little light in the back of my car – how in the world could I ever presume to fix the little light that's supposed to burn in my heart? I can't! And you can't either! We can't fix our heart – our mind – our soul! Only Jesus could do that! And he did! The little baby in the manger came to fix what we couldn't! Jesus came to fix our heart and mind – our immortal soul – by washing away all our sins! That's how much God loves you. He sacrificed his one and only Son to save you!

¹⁰And the angel said unto them, *Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.* *Fear not!* Literally in the Greek – *stop being afraid*. I know you are frightened – but don't be any more! I have little whiskers on my chin – little black whiskers – some gray ones and some little white ones. Every morning – when I shave – I notice there is a little line – under my chin – where the little whiskers don't grow exactly symmetrical – not that you would notice – but there's this little place under my chin where I have a scar. That little scar is from when I was old enough to be in pre-school – they just hadn't invented preschool yet. We lived in a basement house – with a floor that was washed and waxed so that it was actually pretty slippery – especially if you were wearing new soft socks. I discovered – you could run – spin your tires – but once you got going – you could run – and then slide – like an Olympic figure skater! I did it once – twice! My mom told me *stop that – or you could hurt yourself!* I should have listened and done what I was told – but I didn't! I ran once more – slid once more – and crashed into a waste basket – with a very sharp metal oval – black with antique gold – lace like top. I hit that top with my chin and sliced it open. As little as I was – I thought I had cut my throat! I was really scared! To the hospital we went for stitches on my chin. This morning – and early this afternoon – when I shaved again – I saw that scar – and was reminded of my sin! Jesus has forgiven that sin – long ago. And when I get to heaven – that

scar will mercifully be gone! Do you have scars? Maybe physical ones – maybe mental or emotional scars – or all of the above. When we get to heaven they will all be gone – because Jesus came to take them all away!

Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior which is Christ the Lord! Not everyone is happy it's Christmas. Do you know where Hoffman Estates is? It's down by Chicago. There was a family in Hoffman Estates who put out a Christmas display in their yard. It had a manger – Mary and Joseph and some angels. There were other decorations, too. A bunch of gingerbread men and some toys. Somebody drove up onto the yard and crashed into the manger. Someone – on purpose drove their car over the decorations! Oh, they even found an empty bottle of alcohol in the snow. That is only part of the problem. The alcohol in their blood – the bitterness in their heart and the violence in their mind – are symptoms of what happens when you don't understand Jesus' forgiving love! The good news – that Christ the Lord – the Savior has been born changes everything. It changes the hearts and lives of everyone who knows Jesus loves them. The people who had their decorations all run over – are it seems – a little *bitter!* They are leaving their mangled decorations out in their yard – as a sad testimony to what happened to them. They said again and again – *this Christmas belongs to the Grinch!* No it doesn't! This Christmas – every Christmas – belongs to the Christ child! Here was the golden opportunity to say – nothing can steal – nothing – not even death itself can steal from our hearts the good news that Christ the Savior is born! Let the devil do his worst – we are safe in Jesus' nail marked hands. If crunching some yard ornaments can spoil your Christmas – then where will we be – when real disasters come? Jesus died and rose again so that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ – *neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future nor any powers – neither height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is ours in Christ Jesus our Lord!*

Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior which is Christ the Lord! When I first started to write this sermon – I planned to conclude by telling you the back-up light on my 2002 Envoy – with the Gospel license plates – is burned out too! That light is built into our bumper. I have no idea how you even get at it! But after what happened on Tuesday I am telling you again – *people are very breakable.* It's easy to forget that. It's easy to think that people – especially young people are indestructible – but they aren't! Twenty years ago – it was a snowy Christmas. There were a couple of little boys sledding – coming down a hill – from their farm house – towards the little country road that nobody ever drove on. Coming down the hill – if anything did go wrong – if *heaven forbid* – a car was coming – all you needed to do was roll off the sled into the ditch! Two little boys came flying down the hill – faster and faster on the nearly frozen crust of the snow! Here came a car! Roll off – jump off! But one didn't! People are very breakable! It is at Christmas time – that we are reminded – the little Lord Jesus was born in a stable – and sleeping in a manger – come into this world to die to wash away our sins. We are born into this world. We are born to die. **The wages of sin is death! But the gift of God is eternal life in the Christ child – Christ the Lord our Savior!** When people die around Christmas time and New Year's and Holy Week and Easter – be reminded – Heaven is the ultimate goal for all of us. Tonight again – these children will do the work of the angels – to tell us – even at the most painful of times, **Fear not. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour – which is Christ the Lord!** Jesus was born – so whenever we die – we will come home to Heaven for Jesus' sake. Amen! *God bless us everyone!*



Rev. Anthony E. Schwartz