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HOLY CROSS LUTHERAN CHURCH

Words from the Cross

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***What child is this who, laid to rest,
On Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet
While shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,
The babe, the Son of Mary.*** (LSB #370:1)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

"What child is this?" asks the hymn writer. Who was this helpless child born in a stable and laid in a manger? He had the form of a mere human child. Contrary to what is depicted in some paintings and in most crèches, there was no radiating nimbus around His head. But what did the angel of the Lord declare to the astonished shepherds? He said that this Child "is Christ the Lord," God over everything.

Oh, what a wondrous message! With this birth, God and man became united in one person. The Infinite became finite. The Immortal took on mortality. The Almighty God joined Himself with powerless dust. The Creator became a creature. The Lord of lords, at whose feet all angels and archangels lay prostrate with covered faces, suffered Himself to be lifted up and carried in the hands of sinners. Christ, the eternal Light, came into the world to be a companion of those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. He whom the heavens cannot contain and for whom the earth serves as His footstool came down to share with the inhabitants of dust their huts of earth and clay.

Oh, what a great mystery! God is revealed in flesh! What mind of man or of the highest angel can look into the depths of this divine plan and find the reason? The holy angels surely desired to make inquiry but, being unable to understand it, they could only worship as they sang: "Glory to God in the highest!" (Luke 2:14). What can compare with this supreme miracle: The Word of God became flesh? What is the miracle of the world created out of nothing, the miracle of the creating of the vaults of heaven with countless stars running through their appointed paths, the miracle of the preservation of the universe and all that lives and moves in it? What are these wonders against the miracle that God divested Himself of His divine glory, descended from His heavenly throne to come to earth, and assumed the very form of a creature who had fallen away from Him?

Where is the language that has the words that can even begin to express the importance of such a birth? At first, the angels praised this birth in an earthly language. Then they hastened back into heaven to continue there, before the throne of God, their eternal song of praise. As for us, what can we do but bow our heads in humble adoration and worship that which we cannot comprehend? May we, like those shepherds of old, share the Good News with others that they too might rejoice not only in His birth but also in the salvation that was won by that heavenly Child later on the cross.

"Haste, haste to bring him laud, the Babe the son of Mary!"

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Skelton