

Sermon, December 19, 2021
Micah 5:2-5; Luke 19-45
“The Angels Proclaim: Not Forgotten”
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Can you believe it? When we gather again for worship, we will either be on the cusp of Christmas and or the day after Christmas. So barring anything strange happening this week, I want to be the first to congratulate you on making it through another Advent/Christmas Season. Why, before we know it, we will be celebrating the beginning of a New Year.

This season is probably my favorite time of the year, between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day, it's just one great holiday after another, Thanksgiving, Advent, Christmas, New Year football. It kind of takes a bit of the sting out of the winter season.

I love this holiday season, but I'm not, as I have mentioned before, a huge fan of Winter. Yes, I know many people love it and lose their minds at the first snowfall, and that's wonderful. It's just not mine. Although I will admit I wouldn't want the season to come at any other time. There is something about the early blanket of darkness, the chill that keeps us inside that creates a sense of intimacy for us.

Perhaps that's why Christmas movies are so popular. It's a great activity when it's cold and dark out. Do you have a favorite Christmas movie? Most people have one. And they are broad, ranging from White Christmas to The Rankin and Bass Christmas specials from Love, Actually to Elf. From, in my mind, the

best written Christmas movie, A Christmas Story, to Die Hard. It happens on Christmas Eve, there is a Christmas party and presents. It's a Christmas movie.

And of course Home Alone. You know this one, yes? Little boy gets left by his family, he has to fend off burglars, slapstick is involved, and he has a heartwarming reminder of how lovely family is. They all are together on Christmas.

Have you seen it? Is anyone struck by the fact that the family is horrible? They are. They let the little boy Kevin be bullied, one of the Uncles is absolutely horrible to him, and the Dad and Mom do nothing to stand up for him. They are so obsessed with this trip where dad can afford to take 8 billion family members on a trip at Christmas to France that they leave this child at home. Who does that? Who misses a count that bad at the airport?

But it's easy to see why. They are busy, they have a lot on their minds. He's a quiet little boy, and it's easy to see why, in the hustle and bustle of a big adventure, he might get past over. His ticket gets thrown away, so they don't miss the fact he doesn't have his ticket, his invitation to the grand adventure. You have an equal amount of tickets, and an equal amount of people. It must be OK. They are in a hurry, they have to get to the airport. And someone, the least and the smallest, gets left behind. They are Home alone.

I will admit there are times I have watched this movie and enjoyed the slapstick battle between Kevin and the burglars, but the family self-obsessed, inattentive, ignoring the smallest person, the quiet one, the helpless, and defenseless, just leaves a bad taste in my mouth.

But as I contemplate it, I wonder if the reason it leaves a bad taste in my mouth is that perhaps the depiction of people who are busy, who are self-obsessed, who don't extend an invitation to the helpless and the lowest, the forgotten, hits a bit too close to home. How many of us, in our hustle to celebrate Christmas, to do it right, have left people home alone?

We have, over the past many weeks in Advent, looked at the proclamations of the angels concerning the birth of Jesus. And last week, we mentioned that if you have paying close attention to these proclamations both in the Old and New Testament, they have a constant theme. This is Good News, we have Good News of a great Joy. Over and over again, it's Good News, it's a Joy. The angelic host strains at the gate to proclaim this incredible thing that has happened,

But there is another theme, as well. It's not so much about the what as the *who*. Have you been paying attention as to who the Angels have been making these proclamations? The chief priest does not get an angelic visit. King Herod doesn't get one, either. Nor does the Roman Governor. All of who might have made things easier for Jesus as an infant. The Pharisees the Sadducees all go without any angelic proclamations. The wise men have to figure it out by divine wisdom and astrological signs.

Now they are all invited through the Scriptures. That's true. But look at who in particular gets that invitation by the angels. An older woman passed her childbearing years. Her husband, an older man puttering around in the temple. To a young girl from an insignificant family. To a young man who will be her husband, a carpenter and stone mason who probably works as much of the Romans living in Judea as he does the Jewish families. Shepherds poor, intenerate works, wrapping threadbare robes around them to ward off the cold. These people, the small, the powerless, the forgotten, the ones unable to speak for themselves, these are the ones invited to the manger, they are the ones told to prepare for the coming of the Messiah. Why, even the town when Jesus is to be born is small and lowly. Yes, it's the birthplace of David. But that's all it's got going for it. There is no palace, there is no rich and wealthy people, it's not Rome. It's not Athens' it's not even Jerusalem. It's a place most likely to be forgotten about by travelers.

Do you see it? Over and over' we see Jesus didn't just come for the powerful, the wealthy, the famous, the popular. He came for the small, the forgotten, those who don't have a voice for themselves, those who have been told they have nothing to contribute, the lost, the lonely. He came for the Kevin's of the world.

How sad, even tragic, the ones who are to be called to celebrate Christmas first are the ones today most often left behind. In a constantly self-centered and materialistic world, we send the message if you don't have people around you, if you don't have money or things, this really isn't the holiday for you. You are small, you have no voice, and you will be left Home Alone.

As I said before, the family in that movie do strike too close to home. We often get too tied up in our lives, in our plans, what we want, and the busyness, it causes us to turn a deaf ear to the lonely, the forgotten, the lost around us. We can even, as the church, be so concerned with getting Christmas right we forget Jesus' desire to call the forgotten and the lost first before all others.

But what if we didn't? What if we decided this year to make Christmas different. Who are the poor you know in your life and world who need an invitation to celebrate Christmas? What might happen if you call that neighbor who will spend Christmas alone and you invite them to Christmas Eve worship with you? What if we took our children and had them take all the Christmas money they have been given and encourage them to take even a small amount and buy a gift for a needy child or family?

What if you took that coworker who is stressed out, irritable and you took them out for coffee or dinner and told them about your relationship with Jesus, and invited them to come and celebrate at church with your family? That's a hard one. But should it be? Shouldn't that person's soul be more important than our being uncomfortable?

What if you made a meal for the hungry? Bought a new coat to give to a clothing drive? What if we prayed more for the homeless and the hungry, the beggar, and spent less time seeing them as a nuisance? What if

you and your family decided this year your Christmas gift would be sponsoring a child through one of the many wonderful agencies that do these ministries? So that a child has an education and clothing is told about Jesus?

What if this year, we took the Good News to heart and remembered the small, the helpless, and forgotten? What if this year we are determined to proclaim with the angels that this year, no one would be left behind or alone? Amen.