

St James United Church

Message for December 24, 2025 Christmas Eve (Family Service)



“We are the Story” - Preached by Rev. James Ravenscroft

My goodness that was fun. I had no idea what to expect when we decided to do a truly pop-up pageant, the only pre-selected participants being our band, the narrator, and me. The rest was up to all of you and your willingness to participate. Thank you to everyone who came forward. In doing so you helped the story to come alive and, in the process, gave us some food for thought.

Now there were teachings about the significance of Jesus’ birth as part of the narration and dialogue. Like the historical context into which Jesus was born, his country no longer independent but part of the Roman Empire. We shouldn’t forget that because it reminds us that he came not just for a spiritual purpose but so his message could be applied in tangible ways in our context too, not just loving others in general, but letting love shape how we live, including shaping the decisions we make about the society we live in.

And that is a key point in the structure of the pageant. I’m sure some of you thought it a bit odd to leave it open for there to be not just multiple shepherds and angels, but Marys and Josephs too. It was practical. You are more likely to participate in a role you want to play. And it was a value-based decision, us wanting to be really inclusive, no one left out who wanted to take part. Most of all though it was because it is the heart of the Christmas story, Jesus born for each and every one of us.

But there is something deeper than that. If we are to live God’s love in tangible ways, we need to think of this story as our story. We’re all Mary, willing to say yes to God even if we don’t know the final outcome. We’re all Joseph, true to our promises even when the path we thought we were on has an unexpected curve. We’re all the emperor, a bit too full of ourselves. We’re all shepherds, overlooked and left behind. We’re all the animals, not always giving as we could but when challenged rise to what we need to do. We’re even angels, sharing with others the good news of God’s love, God’s life revealed in Jesus’ birth.

And that is the best part. We’re all Jesus. The angel Gabriel told Mary that Jesus would be known as Son of God. Why was that? Because people experienced God in and through Jesus. In this Jesus is like a window into God, we see what God is like. As Jesus loved, challenged, welcomed, healed, forgave, had compassion, we get a glimpse of who God is. But more than that we get a glimpse of who we are to be. Not that we are God. That assumption is what gets us into trouble. But Jesus was born so we could share in God’s energy, remember again that when we were made, God breathed into us, sharing that energy with us. I realize that some of us may bristle at that. We’ve been taught to see God and us as separated, God as far away because there’s something twisted in us. But Jesus was born to show us how false that is, that God wants to be close, has always been close, present around us, and within us, loving us and healing us so that the spark of divine energy in us can be fanned into a light that shines for others to see.

And so not only is Jesus a window into who God is but we are to be as well. We are to see that holy presence in each other. That invites us I think to be our better selves. And shape the world accordingly. We get glimpses of this each Christmas when we share more freely, welcome more heartily, love more fully, and even question more firmly why it’s not like that all the time. Perhaps if we recognized Jesus in ourselves a bit more, we might live it all year and every year.

So, as we continue to celebrate this Christmas, may we do so recognizing ourselves in this celebration, all of us every part of the story, most importantly all of us able to live what the story calls us to, a world where we take seriously God’s love and life in us, & live that reality in how we love and live for others.