

The Christmas Pageant

January 1, 2023

Welcome to the Beamsville Church of Christ Online Ministry. Happy New Year! This week's message is titled "The Christmas Pageant." Thank you to Glynnis, Paul, Dave, Ed, and Don for being involved in the video. The scripture reading is Luke 2:1-7.

Welcome, Announcements, Prayer

It's wonderful to see everybody this morning. I am super stoked for Christmas. I love Christmas. It's my favorite time of the year. I used to be a teacher and I had I wore red every day in December and I had a different pair of Christmas earrings every school day in December. And I've pared it down to now just wearing red. But I got something when I was away that I think was really cool. I'm not big into t shirts and stuff. It's not my best look, but I got this t shirt. Best day ever, so I'll show you on this side says best day ever. And I looked at it, I thought, Oh yeah, Christmas is the best day ever. And then I sort of did that. And I, you know, the t shirt manufacturer thought about this long before I did. It's like, oh my gosh, it really is the best day ever. It's the day that God made Jesus into a Well, I guess he made him like theoretically inside his mother before that. But it's the day that we celebrate God bringing himself to Earth. And that really is the best day ever. And of course, we know how the story ends and how we all are freed. And to me, that that is my favorite hymn is Joy to the World. I love Joy to the world because it is like, this is amazing. So I encourage you to think about that while you're celebrating Christmas.

So we do have a few announcements. We've got a few birthdays coming up this week. Geoff, Earl and Tabitha all have birthdays this week. But the best thing of all so the very best thing of all is that Geoff and Jan will be celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary. Isn't that amazing? 40 years. That's a good long time to be loving somebody. It's amazing. And from the treasurers, anybody that has receipts, please make sure that they are giving in to Adam before January 8th. So that's kind of your deadline. If you've bought something and you need reimbursement for that's your deadline. And Jack and Marie are both home from the hospital and looking forward to a quiet and restful holiday season. So hopefully both of them will enjoy the rest. Michael was talking to them yesterday and they're in great spirits and they're very grateful for the prayers. It's amazing to me how much knowing that other people are praying for you can make in your life. I know people have been praying for our family with the passing of our mom and it makes a huge difference. So thank you. And I'd also like to say thank you from our family for the flower. Beautiful flowers that we got. I got to enjoy them at my house, which was really nice. So let's say a quick prayer and we'll get started with our service.

Dearest Lord God, thank you so much that we can come together as your family. God, that we can come together with like spirits and be joyful together, God, and worship you. We're so grateful for all the many ways that you take care of us. We ask you to be with those that are sick, mourning God. There's so many needs. We know that you know them and we know lots of times we don't. We pray for your blessing, especially on them. God, we love you so much. Thank you. Bless our service in Jesus name. Amen.

Communion

Good morning. Join with me at the Lord's table. I do truly enjoy the Christmas season. And one of the things that I enjoy the Christmas season the most about is the idea of the Christmas spirit. You know what I mean? When I say the Christmas spirit, the idea that there is actually hope for humankind, that we do in fact have the capacity to be kind, to be loving, to be gentle, to be tolerant, to be understanding of each other. Now I know that seems pie in the sky and a bit unrealistic in our world. And yet this time of year that attitude prevails. And at least for me, it's a bit of a respite, a bit of a warm feeling and a bit of a yeah, let's go. How does this fit with the Lord's table? I think when I sit down to apply my analytical mind to the Christmas spirit, I get really depressed because I look at the condition of our world, I look at the condition of my own heart, and I say, Yeah, the chances of this succeeding is pretty, pretty low, but that's leaving Christ out. If we celebrate Christ's coming, we also celebrate what He did for us on the cross. It's through what he did for us on the cross that the power of God is given to us on this planet. Romans six and Ephesians one both talk about us participating with Christ in his two better, best death, burial and resurrection in Romans six and Ephesians one, Paul talks about that the same power of the resurrection is available to us.

If we have that same power of the resurrection, we can actually participate and be successful in the Christmas spirit on our own. We can't do it, but with Christ we can and it's because of Christ in the cross that we have that hope, both eternal and today and tomorrow. So today, as we remind ourselves of Christ's death on the cross, we look forward to it through his coming Christmas. But we remind ourselves specifically of it. I also want to suggest that we remind ourselves that we are also participated in that death and resurrection. Personally, it's not a separate event that happened to somebody else that we benefit from, but we actually participate in it. And then we also participate. We remind ourselves that we actually benefit directly from it. So that same power of the resurrection is available in our own lives so that we can go out and love each other unconditionally. Be kind, be thoughtful, be tolerant with each other. Let's go to God in prayer.

Dear Lord, thank you for all you've given us and always bless us with thank you for this time, Lord. As we come to the table, we we ask that you be with us as we think about your son, the cross. We think about our own lives as we have participated with him, that that same power of the cross is available to us. Lord, help us to live like a people who have that power available to us. Help us to spread the love of your son wherever we go in Jesus name. Amen.

Reading: Luke 2:1-7

A comment before I bring you the reading: I appreciate the emphasis that has been generated. I think it would be easy for us to be misdirected by society today. Perhaps the current cultural emphasis on this time of year and miss the real significance of the event was recorded here. God became human. The beginning continued in us. Luke Chapter two The first seven verses in those days, Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria. And everyone went to their own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea to Bethlehem, the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child while they were there. The time came for the

baby to be born and she gave birth to her first born a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger because there was no room, no guestroom available for them.

Sermon

Good morning, everyone. Thank you for being here with us. People who've come from hot countries where they've never experienced cold or snow when they come to places like Canada and see snow and experienced snow for the first time can be very, very confusing. Came across this article that I thought you might like. A man from the West African country of Gambia who was not used to Germany's winter weather, woke up to find his car, had gone completely white overnight and called the police to complain. Vandals had painted it white. Police in the central German town of Hildesheim discovered the man had mistaken snow for paint when he looked down from his apartment window. He said to him, it looked like paint. He said, I've never seen snow before. And I forget that their places in the world where that is actually quite true. Christmas time can be confusing for many, many people.

Sometimes it's a glorious occasion. Sometimes it's a confusing occasion. It's different for different people. So just by a show of hands, how many remember when you were in public school? Kindergarten to grade eight, participating in a Christmas school concert? Just raise your hand. Keep it up high. So that's quite a few of us. Many of us had to practice singing different songs and so forth. Parents would come, grandparents would come. It was always a wonderful time. I don't know if that's even politically correct anymore, but it was. It was a wonderful time with great occasions. We came across this and I thought you might like it. It's simply called the Christmas pageant and interesting reptiles reconciled. I said that correctly. Still goes this way. I'll never forget the Christmas on my seventh year I was going to sing several carols with my classmates in the Christmas pageant at school. We had been practicing for about a month, a week before the pageant. My mother's family had their Christmas celebration. Mother had been bragging about how I was going to sing at school, and I was cajoled into singing one of the carols for the Culture Clan. They're telling my aunt, which Carol to play. I sing out as sweetly and sincerely as only a seven year old. Can I sing? Hark auld herald angels sings. Glory to the newborn king. Peace on earth. So mercy smiles because God in reptiles reconciled. That's as far as I got because my aunt could no longer play the piano. She was laughing so hard. My uncle laughed so hard he spilled just drink on his lap. And when he tried to mop it up, he lost his balance and slid out of his chair. I was absolutely mortified. I had no idea why everyone was laughing at me. I burst into tears and ran upstairs to my bedroom crying. I was really surprised when my oldest and most straight laced aunt came into my room.

To tell you the truth, I was always afraid of her, but she tenderly took me in her arms and with loving words told me, Honey, it's okay, don't cry. Everyone was laughing because of the wonderful new words I had sung for The Christmas Carol. And even though everyone else learned in a different way, mine was so much better. She kissed me and wash my face and told me to come downstairs with her. Because it was a surprise. A surprise? She's waiting for me hand in hand. We took the stairs down to the living room. Just as we got there, the music began to play and the whole culture clan began to sing my own words as I stood listening to them, singing my misconstrued version of Hark the Herald Angels Sing, I felt more loved than I had ever felt in my life. My lips were trembling. I stepped forward and began to sing as my extended family sang Carol. After Carol in arm slipped around each other in a wonderful familial glow, I realized Christmas wasn't about festive decorations or the Christmas tree, or even the gifts under it. Christmas was about love given freely and with joy. As one of my older cousins

gave me a squeeze and a smile, I was sure hark old heralds Angel was singing with us and I had gotten the words right after all.

So Christmas is so unique and so, so many ways. This is called Christmas pageant. My husband and I had been happily married most of the time for five years, but hadn't been blessed with the baby. I decided to do some serious praying and promised God that if He would give us a child, I would be the perfect mother. Love it with all my heart and raise it with his word. As my guide. God answered my prayers and blessed us with a son. The next year, God blessed us with another son. The following year He blessed us with another son. The year after that, we were blessed with a daughter. My husband thought we had been blessed right into poverty. We now had four children excuse me. And the oldest was only four years old. I learned never to ask God for anything unless I really meant it. As a minister once told me, If you pray for rain, make sure you carry an embryo. I began reading a few verses of the Bible to the children each day as they lay in their cribs. I was off to a good start. God had entrusted me with four children and I didn't want to disappoint him. I tried to be patient the day the children smashed two dozen eggs on the kitchen floor searching for a baby chick. I tried to be understanding when they started a hotel for homeless frogs in the spare bedroom, although it took me nearly 2 hours to catch all 23 frogs. When my daughter poured ketchup all over herself and rolled up in a blanket to see how it felt to be a hot dog, I tried to see the humor rather than the mess. In spite of changing over 25,000 diapers, never eating a hot meal, never sleeping for more than 30 minutes at a time. I still thank God daily for my children.

While I couldn't keep my promise to be a perfect mom. I didn't even come close. I did keep my promise to raise them in the Word of God. I knew I was missing the mark just a little. When I told my daughter that we were going to church to worship God and she wanted to bring a bar of soap along so that she could worship to something was lost in the translation. When I explained that God gave us everlasting life and my son thought it was generous of God to give us His last wife. My proudest moment came during the Children's Christmas pageant. How many remember those Christmas pageants? I remember it was at a school in Bronte, which is now Oakville. We would stand on risers. Parents would come in and we would sing to the best of our ability. And the one thing that I remember, I can't remember a song. But the one thing I can remember was the joy. I was often afraid of adults that I didn't know. Sometimes they look stern. Many of the people that look stern, I got to know them better and found out how lovely and how gentle they were. Parents, adults coming to share with these Christmas concert was wonderful.

My five year old shepherd had practiced his line. We found the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes. But he was nervous. And he said the baby was wrapped in wrinkled clothes. My four year old Mary said, that's not wrinkled clothes, silly. That's dirty rotten clothes. And a wrestling match broke out between Mary and the Shepherd and was stopped by an angel. Who Burt, who are bent her halo and lost her left wing. And it was crazy. I slouched lower in my seat when Mary dropped the doll representing baby Jesus, and it bounced down the aisle crying. My, my momma and Mary grabbed the doll, wrapped it up, held it tightly. As the wise man arrived. My other son stepped forward, wearing a bathrobe and a paper crown, knelt at the manger and announced, We are the wise men and we are bringing gifts of gold, common sense and fur. The congregation dissolved into laughter and the pageant got a standing ovation. I never enjoyed a Christmas program as much as this one laughed, the minister, wiping tears from his eyes for the rest of my life. I'll never hear the Christmas story without thinking of gold. Common sense and fur. My children are my pride and my joy and my greatest blessing, I said as I dug

through my purse for an aspirin. Jesus had no servants, and yet they call the master. He had no degree, and yet they called him teacher, had no medicines. Yet they called him healer, had no army. Yet King's feared him.

So for many years, again, I don't know what it's like in public school anymore, but many years just before the Christmas break, our teachers would give us candy canes. Anyone ever get candy canes before leaving you? Christmas time. There was actually a story written about the candy cane, and I hope all this will come together. Of course, this way. There once were two villages in a far off land. One was in a valley and one was on the mountaintop. The people on the mountain village wanted to give each person in the valley a gift of love at Christmas. The people in the valley were having difficult times, but those in the Mountain Village were doing well. Sometimes when we're on a mountaintop, we can help those who are going through a valley in their life. So a committee was formed of townspeople to see if someone would be able to think of something special. Money was limited. Each gift had to be of equal value to each person. After much time and discussion, a decision was finally reached. An elderly gentleman who had loved Jesus for many, many years and who was well respected and loved, came up with the idea of a candy cane. Now you may be thinking, What's so special about a candy cane? And How can it ever be tied to the real meaning of Christmas?

Well, here is how and why the candy cane is the shape of a shepherd's staff. Jesus is our shepherd and we are his flock. A sheep follows his own. Shepherd, knows his voice and trusts him, knows that he is totally safe with him. The sheep will follow no other shepherd but their own. This is how we are to be with Jesus. If we truly follow Him upside down. The candy cane is a j, the first letter of Jesus name. It's made of hard candy to remind us that Christ is the rock of our salvation. Acts 412 The Wide red stripes on the candy cane represent the blood he shared on the cross. For each one of us. So that we can have life eternal through him. And with you, he redeems us, forgives us, cleanses us with his shed blood. The only thing that can wash away our sin. Candy canes are very, very special. The white stripes on the candy cane represent the virgin birth sinless life in purity of our Lord. He's the only human being who ever lived on this earth, who never committed a single cent, even though he was tempted just as we are. He didn't sin. first Peter to the narrow red stripes on candy canes, symbolized that by his stripes or wounds. We are healed before the crucifixion. Jesus was beaten. Crown of thorns was placed on his head. His back was raw from the whip. We are healed by those wounds when we hear the story of the crucifixion. We just can't stand. But he bore our sorrows, forgave us our sins. Because of what he did. The flavoring in the candy cane is peppermint, which is similar to hyssop. Hyssop is of the mint family and was used in the Old Testament for times of purification and sacrifice. When we break our candy cane, it reminds us that Jesus body was broken for us. When we have communion, it's a reminder of what He did for us. And if we share our candy cane and give some to someone else we love, it's because we love. And it represents that same love. Jesus has for us. It connects us to Him and to everyone else. God gave Himself to us when He sent Jesus. He loved us so much that He wants us to have a full and abundant life in Him which we can when we accept Jesus himself.

I love the story of the candy cane. It represents from the very beginning. And I'm going to wrap up this is a brief message today. I'd like us to just notice from Jesus birth his life, his death and his resurrection, how we are all connected in all of it. In all of it. John 1011 Jesus said, I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. Psalm 23. The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not be in need. I shall not be in want. Isaiah he tends his flock like a shepherd. He gathers the lambs. We are the lambs in his arms. And he carries you and I close to his heart. And he still does. And

so there's salvation in no one else. There's no other name under heaven given by men which we must be saved. So when Peter and John and Paul and others were talking with people, he would always say. They would always say. And now what are you waiting for? Get up. Be baptized. Call on his name. Christmas and salvation are all put together to this, you recalled, because Christ suffered for you, leaving us, you and I. An example that we should follow in his steps. He committed no sin, no deceit was in his mouth. When they hurled insults at him. He did not retaliate. When he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him. Who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body, on the tree, so that we might die the sins and live for righteousness by his wounds. We have been healed where we are like sheep going astray, but now have returned to the shepherd, the overseer of our souls. Christmas is not just about the birth of Jesus, but it's about everything. It's about everything. His birth, his life, his death. Our resurrection. Our birth, our life, our death, our resurrection. There's never a moment in your day where God is not with us.

And I think it's important. Every once in a while to remember, every single day, even when we wake up. God was with us when we slept. God is with us now. It is promise. It's true. The birth of Jesus is wonderful in his life comes into our life if we continually ask him. In fact, at First Corinthians, even when we take communion, we remember that when he had given sakes, he broke bread and said, This is my body given for anybody. Remember who you are. It's given for you. How's that for a Christmas gift? Is for you, dear friends. Let us love one another. For love comes from God. Everyone who loves. Has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not know God. It's not a good idea. It's a better idea to know God because God is love. I wish for each one this year. A Happy Christmas, a wonderful Christmas, a joyous Christmas and may. New thoughts and new understandings of this Christ child come into your heart deeply. It's not just one day, but it's the story of Jesus reminding us. I've come for you. I live in you. You and I are together. And we'll see each other again one of these days. Amen.

Song Leader Comment

I have had the opportunity over the last three weeks to sing in four Christmas concerts. And it's amazing to me when you start rehearsing music for these concerns. What a variety of music that there is that celebrates Christmas. Just a huge variety. The songs in our hymn book are old songs, and for many of us, these are the songs of our upbringing. They were the songs that were sung at Christmas concerts when we were kids. And sometimes the language in these songs is a little different. The last song that we're going to sing today is called Angels We Have Heard on High, and it summarizes a lot of the things that Don has been talking about today. In the refrain it says, Gloria, in excelsis deo, that means glory to God in the highest. That's what it means. So I just want you to know that before we sing this song, I invite you to stand.

Closing & Prayer

Oh, please have a seat. I cannot sing that song without thinking about singing that song. To my very dear friend Gloria. And that reminds me how grateful I am, certainly for her love, but also for the love of all the people that have passed this year. And it makes me so happy to think about them singing that song right in front of God. It's amazing. And it is the goal of our faith. And so I just I just had to say that it just. Yeah. I still look out and see that beautiful, sunshiny smile, and it makes my heart so grateful. Let us get together and have a prayer to close out our service. Dearest Lord, God, thank you so much for this glorious time. God, thank you so much for the lessons that we've heard today. God, that we

can be inspired by the pageant, the Christmas pageant, your the way that you've planted that in so many of our hearts. God, that it's a whole Christmas spirit. And it's not about red, even though I love red. It's not about any of those things. It's about you. God, thank you so much for the gift of your son. It truly was the best day ever for all of us. God, we love you. We thank you for all the things that you give us. Please help us to see needs around us in the coming week and see what we can do to meet them. God, we love you. We thank you. And we pray your blessing on our week. In Jesus name, we pray. Amen. Have a great week.

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