

### Sermon on Christmas Story

Several years ago I took part in an amazing program. A group of Christian Education leaders had decided to present the Christmas story to a group of children who were around eight and nine years old.

It was the first time that these children, a group of 56, were hearing the Christmas story. The leaders wanted to know what the children' first reaction to the story would be.

**The Christmas story they presented to the children was about the shepherds and the angels.**

They used beautiful pictures, while they were narrating the Christmas story. They summarized the story of the shepherds and the angels.

They told the children that an angel of God appeared to the shepherds in the field at night. The shepherds were terrified. But when the angel told them that God has send his Son, the Saviour, to them as a baby, and let them know, where to find him, the shepherds became happy.

Then, a choir of angels appeared to the shepherds. The choir of angels sang a beautiful song to praise and thank God. After this, the angels went back to heaven and the shepherds left the field to find the baby Savior. Finally, the shepherds found the baby and his family. The baby was put in a manger, because there was no room for them at the inn. Then, the shepherds left the baby and his family, to share the good news with everybody.

Now, the leaders divided the children to seven groups and ask them to read the story themselves and write down what they understood from the story.

**These are the main reflections of the eight groups of children:**

- 1) Shepherds are not brave at nighttime.
- 2) Shepherds should carry flashlights.
- 3) Angels should not come at nighttime, because they may scare the people.
- 4) Some angels are scary, but when they start talking, they become nice.
- 5) Angels bring good news.
- 6) When angels sing, something wonderful happens.
- 7) Angels travel between earth and heaven.
- 8) Angels like to be with shephards.
- 9) Angels should not sing loud at nighttime, because they will make some of the neighbors upset.
- 10) Angels come to sing beautiful songs, for the people who work hard at nighttime.
- 11) God loves music.
- 12) God is a bandleader.
- 13) When the shepherds leave the sheep alone, the angels take care of them.
- 14)The baby savior may catch cold in a manger. The people should bring the baby and his family into their houses.
- 15) The people should build a house, for the baby savior and his family.

These are the main reflections of these children. This is how they understood the story.

The main lesson this experiment teaches us, is that the children do not question the characters of the story:

- The shepherds, the angels, the baby Savior, and God, and their relationship with one another do not surprise the children.

- They do not ask whether or not the angels exist. They do not ask what the shepherds are doing in the field at nighttime.
- They do not ask why **the angel** goes to the shepherds to share the good news.
- They do not ask why the savior is not a magnificent warrior, instead of a baby in a manger.

**The children have different attitude and different insight. They look at the whole story with trust and enthusiasm. What they see in the story is how **all of the characters** try to take care of each other, **cooperate** with each other, and **help** each other for a specific purpose.**

**The main challenge for the children is to understand** who the characters are, what they are doing, what they intend to achieve, and how.

Sometimes, when you go to a park you may see a group of children playing together. When a new child comes to the park and does not know anybody, he stands alone looking at the group.

There are often two or three children in the group who go to the newcomer, and pull him into the group. This is an act of complete trust. They happily bring the newcomer to their group, and give him **a role to play, a purpose to achieve**. This is also a pure enthusiasm.

**Nobody questions the newcomer about his religion, background, race, education, and social class.** Sometimes, even the newcomer does not know the language of the group, but the group finds a way to communicate with the newcomer.

Perhaps, this is the main reason why Jesus says:

*“Let the children come to me. Do not stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven, belongs to those who are like these children.” (Matthew 19:13-14)*

We read the Christmas story every year, but if we want to gain deeper insight, and life-changing results, we should become like children, and read the story as a child with **trust, enthusiasm, and wonder.**

Complete trust, pure enthusiasm, wonder, inclusiveness, and cooperation, make children very unique and special.

And this is the very reason why after collecting the children's ideas, we tried to make a theological reflection on the basis of these children's thoughts.

We wrote:

Sometimes, when we are tired from hard work, and we are getting close to the end of our day. We do not expect any wonderful news, but we need it. When we keep the trust, and stay enthusiastic about life, God encounters us. This can be scary at first, but as long as there is a little bit light, God's presence will be felt and his words and songs will be heard by all of us.

Then, God will give us the direction towards the Savior: The Savior who comes to us every year in order **to bring newness into our lives.** God sends the Savior, his Son, into the world, but it is our duty to build a safe house for God's Son: A house that can expand the Kingdom of Jesus to the four corners of the earth.

On this holy night let us meditate on this.

Amen