

12.3.2023 Sermon

Did You Know? A Nativity Story

Matthew 1:18-21 | Luke 1:26-37

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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SPEAKERS

Elder Kevin Brisbin

Good morning, church. I am grateful to share this space with you all this morning. And happy December! We are here in December, ready or not. It's here. We're reading, David's reading the final month of 2023. And I find myself asking, how did we get here? Time is wild, man. The days are long, but the years are fast. And with the arrival of December comes the arrival of Advent.

Today is the first Sunday of Advent. If you're not familiar with this term or the season of the church, I preached a sermon on Advent this Sunday last year, and I invite you to revisit it. You can listen to it on our website, our Facebook page, our YouTube channel under December 4, 2022. The service and the sermon start at about the 54-minute mark. We love worship here. So that's what the first 54 minutes are about. And then, it's also written out on our blog if you're someone who would prefer to read it or be able to scan it. I invite you to look it up on our blog, pull up a chair; it's under the heading Advent. Sure. And it was posted last December 6. And I also just want to say thank you to Dana Boyes and Brian Chilcote for consistently curating and maintaining these resources for us. So, I invite you to use them, they're there for us to use. I often go back and listen to sermons, even years back. I mean, I go back six years. There are a lot of resources on the website. And I certainly enjoy visiting them.

I have to confess, I revisited my own sermon this week, partly because I didn't want to say the same thing since I was preaching the exact same Sunday, the first Sunday of Advent, the first Sunday in December, and wasn't sure what it was before I started preparing. And so, I wasn't sure what I was going to preach on yet. And I was like, I want to make sure I don't say all the same things. But even I was surprised, as I teared up three different times during my own

sermon. As I heard afresh what I had heard God speaking to us, and to me a year ago at this time, it just goes to show it really is less about us. And it's more about what God is saying, saying to us through worship, saying to us through these times, saying to us through the time of saying good morning to one another before, during, and after the service. So, if you're curious or if you're already feeling yourself being pulled into the current of the hustle and bustle that this season is so acquainted with, and you just want to feel like you need to slow down or you feel like you just want to slow down, then those might be a resource for you. That's what that sermon was all about.

And another resource is this Advent tree. It's an invitation to pause, and to reflect and to offer prayers and petitions with thanksgiving and gratitude. And then allow the Prince of Peace to come and occupy you in this season. But fear not, for I bring you good news of great joy this year. I am not preaching on the word Advent again, I am preaching on something else that's been captivating my thoughts and filling me with this new wonder. And that is the Nativity. And since we're in a choose your own adventure series, nativity, I choose you.

Last year, I'd say we were about 50/50 within the church of those who are familiar with the word Advent. Many of us were familiar with it, and about as many were wondering, what's an Advent? But when it comes to the nativity, I'm pretty sure we're probably all pretty familiar with the Nativity. How many of us have a nativity set? Or have seen a nativity set? Yeah, 32, I hear 31. We're making it into a contest. No, you win. Congratulations. I have one. This is mine. You can kind of see it. You can also see like baby Kevin and baby Eric on the wall. That was our engagement picture. Yes, we were like 14, just like Mary. Oh, you're married? Okay, we were not, but we were pretty young. It was so long ago. Like it was yesterday, love.

But you can see this as our nativity. And we accumulated it one to two pieces at a time. My loving mother, Jody, who I've already mentioned once and now twice, gifted a piece of this, one or two pieces of this, a year. And we accrued it that way over a decade. And accruing it in that way, and also taking out each piece because they're boxed and sold individually, you know, it's America, and so of course, they're all sold separately. But opening up each box and taking out each piece uniquely does cause me to pause and slows me down. It's a ritual that I enjoy. Erica is so frustrated with the whole thing because they never fit in the boxes right unless I do it. So, it's a ritual that I get to do. So, every year, I take them all out piece by piece. And you know, I curate our nativity, and it makes me notice each piece uniquely. And that's what I want to do this morning together in this space. I want to examine the Nativity piece by piece afresh and see what Manna is there for us today, here on this good and gracious ground.

So, like any good theater kid, let's start at the very beginning, a very good place to start. And when you sing, you begin with do-re-mi, and when you preach, you begin with etymology.

Etymology, the first three hours are etymology, etymology, yes. Just kidding, it won't be a whole three hours. So, the etymology of Nativity is from the Latin verb 'nasci,' which means to be born. The gestation of the word, pun intended, was a long one. From Merriam-Webster, 'nasci' developed into late Latin into 'nativitas,' meaning birth, which passed through Anglo-French as 'nativite,' before entering English in the 14th century as 'nativity.' Now, sometimes for me, it helps me understand a word like this better, a word that I have a very clear and strong association with, but it's kind of like an ambiguous one. Like, I know what nativity is, but I kind of struggle to explain it in a succinct way. Sometimes it helps me to think of other words that share a similar root word. Words like 'native,' like, that's a more familiar word, something that's native, or native of a place, like someone who's like a native of Chicago, you have a clear picture of who that person is in your head, or a native of New York, a native New Yorker. Another word you might be familiar with is originate, like the word originate, the birth of origin. And a native being a person who's born there, a person who has local credibility because they originated there, they came up there. They're tying a part of their identity to the people, place, and collective communal identity.

And yes, Jesus, the Son of God, the word from the beginning, the Trinitarian being of creation, both precedes origin itself and originated as a native of our world. Yes, the timeless one was first wrapped in time, and then wrapped in swaddling clothes. That's part of his origin story. It's crazy, true, and beautiful. And much, much messier than any of us here are comfortable wrapping our heads around. And that's how it goes with origin stories.

Our family loves movies. We recently just rewatched The Hunger Games because there's an origin story movie that's just now in theaters in the last couple of weeks. I only mention that to say, origin stories are unique because they can shape or reshape the way we think about something. So, we all think we know about the villain in The Hunger Games. But then there's this new movie out now that tells us the origin of this man, who, before, you could just write off as evil. He's just one thing. He's one shade, and he's evil. But then you go back and see his story, what his life was like, what his childhood was like, the experiences that shaped him, the brokenness that entered his life in various ways. And he's not so two-dimensional. It doesn't remove the terrible things that they did. But those things coexist with another balance of life experience that is part of who this person is. And that's what origin stories do. They can really tell us and shape a lot about and shade a lot about who these people are.

I think we have a lot that we can learn and glean by looking at Jesus's origin story here in the Nativity. So, now for a bit of fun. Where does the Nativity happen in the Bible? Where do we get it in Scripture? Does anyone know? I'm sorry, like what book of the Bible? Luke? I'm hearing Luke. Yes, Luke is one of them. And Matthew? Yes, so there are four gospels, right? Mark was written first, then Matthew, then Luke, then John. So, Mark is silent on this issue.

Mark doesn't reference any nativity story at all, no origin of Jesus, just jumps right in with Jesus already on the scene in ministry.

Matthew, the next story that we get, tells us a story of the Nativity, so that is one of them. And then Luke does the same. He also gives us a story. And then John is somewhat silent on it as well unless you prefer your nativity to be, you know, a word in the beginning, and the word being with God and was God, which is a very unique way of Nativity. And I can see myself, regrets and being like, oh, that can be fun, a poetic nativity. I can see myself getting around that. I kind of liked that. But I kind of did that last year's sermon. So again, if you want to hear more about that, I kind of journey through the Nativity through the book of John in chapter one. But that's not what I have for this year. This year, I really want to look at the Nativity stories as they happened in Matthew and in Luke. And I want to do that because they're surprisingly unique.

We just got done with a sermon series on the book of John. You know, we journeyed with John for several years, and I shared many times through that John was unique because he's the one gospel that's apart from the other three, the other three, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, they're referred to as the Synoptic Gospels. Does that word ring a bell? You remember me talking about that. And I had a synoptic table where I compared them all, and I love a comparative table. But they share various parts of the content, a lot of it being shared, therefore, they are considered synoptic. Matthew and Luke, specifically just looking at those two and the overlap, they share 67% of the same content. But the Nativity is not part of that shared part of overlap. It's entirely unique in each. And I find that striking because, you know, here, this is the nativity, the birth of Jesus, like the main event. And it's not even part of that. And the only two books where it's even made the cut. It's part of a 33% of completely unique information.

Which is fascinating because we all understand the nativity story as one story, right? Like when we think about it, we can just retell it from memory, and we retell it with one story and everyone's there. All the characters are there. But the cohesive story that we all know and love is really anything but. Are you intrigued? I hope so. Let's dig in. Let's get comfortable in your chairs. While we allow ourselves to get uncomfortable in our theology, shall we? Just kidding. Well, I'll be fine. I promise you, it's good news of great joy. It's even better than we thought.

Now that being said, there is some overlap, not necessarily narratively, but at least in the cast of characters, of which the overlap is five. Can you guys identify them? Which five characters happen in both Matthew and in Luke? Jesus, he's one of them. Mary, yes, that she's a good one to have there. Joseph, shepherds are not. Angel of the one angel, angel of the Lord, no angel choir in both. The angel of the Lord is in both, no donkey, not an innkeeper, not the wise men. Erica didn't get this one either. It's a very important character, the Holy Spirit. So, the first prize of today goes to the 30 nativity sets, and the second one goes to the Holy Spirit. Way to

be, those are the five characters that are mentioned in both the Matthew and Luke account. Everyone else is listed in one or the other, but not found and is completely absent in the other. So, let's dig into them further, starting with Matthew one. So, Matthew starts in chapter one with a genealogy of 42 generations of fathers beginning sons, tracing the lineage back to both David and then to Abraham, real patriarchs, patriarchs. And then we get the Joseph perspective. Now use the text. It was closer than I thought I could have left it up there. I didn't realize it was that soon, Matt. I'm not trying to be a jerk. This is from Matthew chapter one verses 18 to 19. This is the Joseph perspective, which is the perspective that we are the only perspective we are given in Matthew. This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about. His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit.

Because Joseph, her husband, was faithful to the law and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. Next slide. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Yeshua, because he will save his people from their sins.'

So, because this is Joseph's story, we then skip ahead to after Jesus was born; we don't get a birth of Jesus, we go straight into chapter two, verse one, which starts after Jesus was born. The Magi, an undetermined number of wisemen, Star Gazers, astrologers, really come to call first to King Herod, who is the historical ruler reference point in this account. And based on the intel from the Magi, way to go Magi, King Herod calls for a mass genocide of all Bethel, he-men, and baby boys two years and younger. And while there's no historical evidence of this genocide happening, this is Matthew's story. So, we're just going to let him tell it.

And why does Matthew tell this story? Well, it's because it's an intentional reference to which Old Testament figure? Most yes, so this is a clear reference. Matthew is trying to remind us about Moses, another character where there was a mass genocide of all these, you know, two-year-old boys or less. And, you know, one is preserved here. So, yes, he's trying to get us to think of Moses. And he's just getting started on that.

Joseph then has another dream, and an Angel of the Lord tells him to escape to Egypt. Then after Herod's, they're fairly, I mean, kingly oppressors' death, Joseph has another dream, and an Angel of the Lord tells him to return to Nazareth, delivering them out of Egypt again, like Moses.

So, did you hear any themes in this Matthew account? Anything that stands out? Yes, a lot of Mosaic symbolism coming out of Egypt, boys being genocide, you know, a lot of Mosaic

overlap there. Yes. Major Moses vibes, also major man vibes. Lots of men mentioned in this account, you know, we only get Joseph's perspective. The Magi were men, they go to King Herod, you know, all the patriarchs that a minute, you know, father begetting son, begetting father, begetting son, we're getting father, we're getting son, 42 generations of that. So, we get major man vibes in general, major King vibes. We get a reference to King David in the genealogy, reference to King Herod. Sometimes people even call the Magi, the three kings. We're not even getting into that. But then, they refer to Jesus as 'we are here to see the King of the Jews, we've come to see the King of the Jews.' So, a lot of King vibes in the Matthew account, a lot of Hebrew vibes in general. Matthew is clearly writing to a Jewish audience. He's writing to show that Jesus is the Messiah, the coming King, like his ancestral father, King David. And to start his big presentation, linking Jesus with the goat Hall of Famer, MVD most valuable deliverer, Moses.

Then there's Luke, we get this Luke account in chapters one and two. So, Luke starts first with a prophecy that Elizabeth, Mary's female cousin, will have a baby in her old age, which itself is a callback to what other famous old lady that's going to have a baby? Sarah. So, this callback is to a female in the Old Testament, Sarah, the matriarch of Israel. And this prophecy comes first to Zechariah, who, through his disbelief, is left speechless. Yes, the patriarch of the story is silenced within the first 16 verses of the account. So, then we switch to a fully female account, we get to Mary's perspective in verse 26.

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, 'Greetings, you who are highly favored, the Lord is with you.' Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Yeshua. He will be great and he will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father, David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever. His kingdom will never end.'

'How will this be?' Mary asked the angel, 'since I am a virgin?' The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So, the Holy One to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth, your relative, is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is already in her sixth month, for no word from God will ever fail. 'I am the Lord's servant,' Mary answered, 'may your word be fulfilled.' And then the angel left her.

So, in a nutshell, an angel of the Lord, this time, visits Mary, not Joseph. Although, again, just this is the Luke account. So, an angel of the Lord visits, Mary says you're going to have a

baby, she replies, very impossible, Virgin. Angel, the Lord says possible, Holy Spirit, won't he do it? And to settle the debate once and for all, Mary? Did you know? Yes, Angel, the Lord literally just told her. Also, PS, your cousin Elizabeth, you know, the really old one, is also pregnant.

For Elizabeth and for Sarah, they both deserve better PR. So, Mary visits her really, really old cousin, who's also pregnant. There's cousin love on two levels, Mary and Elizabeth, and John, that will be Baptist, and Jesus, that will be Messiah. As you remember, Elizabeth feels the baby leap in her womb at the arrival of Mary with Jesus inside.

And then, I don't know that I've ever realized this until I was studying it and like noticing all these contrasts. So, we know that Jesus and John the Baptist are cousins. But I don't know that I realized that they were cousins on their mother's side, which I just thought was an interesting connection I hadn't made before.

Elizabeth is then filled with the Holy Spirit and shouts, 'Blessed are you among women, blessed is she who has believed that the Lord will fulfill his promises to her.' Then Mary sings the Magnificat, which is a total callback to Hannah, the mother of Samuel, another matriarch of the Old Testament, like, for real, you guys have to see this comparative table. And you know, I don't mind making a comparative table. So here it is.

So, on the left, we have the song of Hannah. And that's recorded in the Book of First Samuel, chapter two, in verses two through 10. And we have that comparatively laid alongside the song of Mary, which we're following right here in Luke, chapter one, verses 46 through 55. So just kind of skimming through these, I've tried to make bold the parts that really compare, so we don't have to like really dig into and read the whole thing, but we'll kind of skim through. So, song of Hannah, and Hannah prayed and said, 'My heart rejoices in the Lord, my horn is exalted in the Lord, I smile at my enemies because I rejoice in your salvation.' And Mary says, 'My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit has rejoiced in God, my Savior.' And Hannah, she says, 'No one is holy like the Lord, for there is no one beside you, nor is there any rock like our God.' And Mary says, 'For he who is mighty, has done great things for me and holy is his name.'

Hannah, talk no more so very proudly; let no arrogance come from your mouth." Mary says, "He has shown strength with his arm, and he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts." Flipping to the next part of the verse four in Song of Hannah, "The bows of mighty men are broken. Those who stumbled are girded with strength. So, the mighty are broken, and those who stumbled are girded." And then, in Mary, "She says he has put down the mighty from their thrones and has exalted the lowly."

Hannah says, "Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, and the hungry have ceased to hunger." Mary says, "He has filled the hungry with good things." We can flip to the next one. "But the wicked shall be silent in darkness, for by strength no man shall prevail." Mary: "He has put down the mighty from their thrones." Hannah: "The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces." Mary: "The rich he has sent away empty." Hannah: "The Lord will judge the ends of the earth; he will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed." Mary: "He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever." Next one. "That's the end. Oh, that is the end. That's it. That's the end of their songs."

Mary stays with Elizabeth for three more months. No wonder Joseph was worried. Elizabeth has her baby, and on the eighth day, Elizabeth, the woman, names him, and she says his name will be John. And all the men that are gathered there say, "You mispronounced Zechariah, you know, his father." And she says, "Did I stutter? It's John." They say, "There's no one on the whole ancestry.com with that name." They all turn to Zechariah, who finds a tablet and writes, "She said what she said; his name is John." And then his voice returns, and he's filled with the Holy Spirit and prophecies.

Meanwhile, back in Nazareth, Caesar Augustus, who's the ruler reference that's given to us for an historical reference marker. Caesar Augustus orders a census. And folks, there's no historical backup for this either. There's no record of a census having taken place, nor would there have been a need for them to go to Bethlehem if there was a census, because in a census, you don't go to where your ancestors were; they get an account of where you're living now, just like a census is today. But at any rate, again, this is Luke's story, and we're going to let him tell it. And he uses this to get Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem. They arrive. And since we're telling Mary's story, we actually get a birth story.

So, in verse six, we get the birth story, in chapter two, verse six. "So, it was that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger under the house, because there was no guest room for them upstairs.

Now, there were in the same country, shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which will be to all people, for there was born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign to you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.'

Then we get the great company of heavenly hosts singing 'Gloria in Excelsis Deo.' Oh, and after their final encore, and we have to assume that was an encore, right? The shepherds left the 99 and found the one. See what I did there? He was wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger, just as they said. And eventually, we get a genealogy in Luke two. I know you were all waiting for that; those are really popular with people, people love them. Often people's favorite verses. This one gives us 77 generations and leads all the way back to God Himself, listed as the father of Adam. Some speculate that Luke lists 77 generations as a symbol of the forgiveness of all mankind. Because you remember, Jesus, when he's talking to Peter about forgiveness, says, 'Don't forgive seven times, forgive 77 times.' And here are 77 generations that stretch all the way from Jesus, the second Adam, all the way back to the first Adam, and saying they're all forgiven. Which, you know, is poetic.

Now, again, I ask, did you hear any themes? I kind of made it obvious, right? Unlike the Latin Matthew, instead of major male themes, this one has major female vibes, right? Major matriarch vibes. Even the callbacks are to Sarah and to Hannah in the Old Testament. There are no expensive gifts for the king of Jews, rather a baby wrapped in clothes and lying in a manger. Luke is writing to a broader audience, an audience beyond the borders of Israel, beyond both the margins and out into the marginalized among the audience, the poor, the oppressed, the Samaritans, the Gentiles, the women, so many women. And again, where Matthew traces his genealogy all the way to Abraham, the father of Israel, Luke traces it all the way to God, the Father of all.

Now, you may be thinking, so what, who cares? Why or how does any of this matter? Well, for starters, it demonstrates the beauty of diversity. Here we see in the Bible, it's saying more than one thing. In fact, we see it saying two very distinctly different things, and not appearing to have any conflict with that. None at all. It takes no issue with that fact. So, is the nativity story one for the chosen sons of Abraham, the people of Israel, told through the experiences of privileged patriarchs, priests, and kings, elevating the Messiah to a high and holy place? Or is it the story of muted men and women taking center stage, with callbacks to the great internet? I mentioned very old matriarchs of the faith who knew what it was like to live so much of life on the barren fringe? Yes. Is it a story about magi who held court with kings like Herod, and bring pricey presents to a child they call the King of the Jews? Or is it the story of lowly shepherds, humble herders, outcasts of society on the literal outskirts of town, watching their flocks by night, that received the angelic invitation to a baby wrapped in humble swaddling clothes, and laid in an animal feeding trough? Yes. Do you see?

Well, we have probably all understood this is one story for all or most of our lives. If we actually read the texts, as they are written in the Bible, we get two wildly different stories. And why do you think this is? The answer is actually quite simple, because two different people wrote them. Matthew is not Luke, and Luke, is not Matthew. And their differences don't stop there.

Sure, they share 67% of their content of their content, but how they portray that content. The Jesus that they present is very different. From Matthew, Jesus was the Messiah that came in the footsteps of Moses to free the people of Israel, to deliver them and retake the throne of his ancestor, King David. For Luke, Jesus was the divine man that came to get messy in the margins. And love those the world had abandoned, excluded and overlooked, a friend of sinners. And they both got it right.

To ask, Was he holy? Or was he humble is to miss the mark? Because again, the answer is, yes. Because Jesus was not, is not one thing. He didn't have one thing to say, and neither does the Bible that we hold so dear. And that diversity doesn't dilute it rather enriches it. When we see it passing through people through real people. When we allow that to happen, we see it become native to our world in the same way that Jesus became native to our world by entering through humanity. We see the scriptures nativity, it becomes nearer to us, it can become dear to us if we let it. The light of God Passes through every storyteller as through a different facet of a beautiful gem, refracting the experience of God and as many unique ways as it has authors. It says many things, because it speaks them through so many different people in church. God hasn't stopped speaking. So, let's listen.

I have three questions for us this morning. And I want to give us a couple of minutes to begin this reflection here. But I hope that we will all spend some time processing them after the service. I'm going to challenge us, discuss them in the car on the ride home. Discuss them over lunch, ask your kids, ask your parents, ask your friends, ask yourself, and for those inward processes among us, I asked you to break out those journals and jot them down as prompts for future exploration. Follow this star. Listen to the angelic chorus and see where it leads.

Question one: What is your nativity story? And what I mean by that? Where was your story with God born? Write it down. Share it out loud. Maybe it was born in a dorm room with a college roommate, maybe on the street or in your living room with a friend or an unofficial mayor of Westchester? Maybe it was at a tiny table in a Sunday school classroom, in the basement of your church. Or maybe it was as a Google search or a Facebook Live a little church in Westchester. Think back what is your earliest memory Of God I do encourage you to write this to share your story, because no two are alike. And that was the way that it was meant to be. It told you it's even more beautiful than we could have thought.

The second question is: If that first story is what God is speaking to us. The next one is what is God speaking through us? Through you? What is your message? How do you experience God and how their love passes through you and your life experiences? Because how that happens? When that happens, it leaves a unique mark, a unique Imago Dei, god image in you. What is your message? When you meet the nativity, like the Magi, or like the shepherds, this

was a similar thing. Once they interacted with nativity, they went and told others about it. It had that kind of experience, that kind of impact on their life. And the same happens with us when we have a nativity. Jesus enters into our existence, our humanity; it changes us in a way that impacts us so that we want to tell others. What's that unique message that passes only through you?

And the last question is: Just like in Matthew and Luke, your story has a unique audience. Who is your audience? Maybe it's your neighbor, maybe it's a coworker, maybe it's a child. Maybe how we love our neighbor really can become someone else's nativity story. The place where Jesus is born into their life, where Jesus becomes native part of it, the place he claims and finds belonging. The place he was always meant to be made maybe a small act of kindness.

While we're driving, and not being a jerk behind the wheel, or in the line at the grocery store, maybe a small act of kindness can be a needle star for a coworker or a stranger and otherwise, the dark night of the season of the soul, guiding them to a place where the light of the world is warm and was laid low, laid low for all of us.

Both the Jew and the Gentile, laid low for the patriarchy and the feminist movement, the old and barren and the young unwed mother, everyone on the gender spectrum, and everyone on the political spectrum. The high priests and the highly oppressed, the folks you like and the folks who don't. The ones who were looking for a star and the ones who just happened to be on a hill when heaven opened and made us its home among us where God made their nativity with us. Each of us yes, you yes me and yes everyone in between.

Let's hear that angelic encore one last time. We can stop the music let's hear the angelic encore one last time, Glory to God in the highest and on earth. Peace. Good goodwill toward all. Amen.