

SERMON: What Christmas is All About
TEXT: Luke 2:1-20

12-24-2022

“I think there must be something wrong with me. Christmas is coming, but I’m not very happy. I don’t feel the way I’m supposed to feel.”

If these words sound familiar it’s because I’m quoting Charlie Brown from the beloved classic, *A Charlie Brown Christmas*.

But the words could easily be mine - or yours. I’m pretty sure these express the feelings we have all had at one time or another. It just doesn’t feel like Christmas. Or, we just don’t have any Christmas spirit. We feel depressed and let down. Or, again quoting Charlie Brown, “I know nobody likes me; why do we have to have a holiday season to emphasize it?”

I think people love Charlie Brown so much because he is honest and open about the feelings we sometimes find hard to

talk about. He often feels left out, neglected, and lonely. He gets frustrated with all the commercialism and greed of the season. Even his closest family and friends have gotten caught up in it. Lucy, standing in her "psychiatrist" booth, loves the sound of those clinking nickels in the can where her patients make payment for her services. His sister, Sally, in her letter to Santa, suggests that he make it easy on himself and "just send money - preferably tens and twenties." Even his dog, Snoopy, has decorated his doghouse, hoping to win a contest with a cash prize.

I watched a documentary recently about the life of Charles M. Schulz, the creator of the Peanuts comic strip and the Charlie Brown animated features. *A Charlie Brown Christmas* was the first to air on national television. Schulz came up with an outline for the story in four days, and the production was miraculously completed in six months. Even though several times along the way, Schulz had to fight to keep it the way he envisioned it.

Schulz insisted that child actors voice the characters instead of adults, and that there be no laugh track used in the production. CBS executives deemed the story "too overtly religious." Especially the scene where Linus recites from the Gospel of Luke about the night Jesus was born. They were afraid that reading from the Bible in a cartoon was somehow sacrilegious. But Charles Schulz insisted the Bible was not just for church, but for everyone. And he refused to change it.

So, the show aired in prime time on national television, and CBS expected it to bomb. But the next day, when they got thousands of phone calls praising *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, "it was as if all heaven broke loose," as one executive described it.

The turning point of the story comes when Charlie Brown - out of his frustration and despair - shouts a question to the universe: "Isn't there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about?" Then Linus steps forward, and in his quiet, gentle way, assures his friend and makes the stage his pulpit.

Reciting from memory, Linus shares from the Gospel of Luke.

“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, *Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.* And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.*”

“That’s what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown.”

Despite his perceived failures, despite the misguided attitudes of his friends, despite the ways of the world, Christ was born.

That's the message that we need, too. The weather has not cooperated with our plans. People are stuck in airports or unable to drive on snow-covered roads. Churches have canceled their services because it's just too cold. Illness can keep us from celebrating the way we would like. Perhaps you ran out of time and didn't get your shopping done. Relationships are broken, loved ones pass away. Countries are at war across their borders and even within; neighbors fight with each other; family members aren't speaking to one another.

All of these circumstances can ruin Christmas for us. But Jesus was born out of God's abundant love for us, and no circumstance can change that truth. Nothing can ruin it or spoil it. Nothing can postpone it or stand in the way of it. Jesus was born to restore our hope. Jesus was born to bring us peace. Jesus was

born to show us love. Jesus was born, that we might have joy.
Jesus was born to bring light to the darkness.

*Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy,
which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the
city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.*

That's WHAT CHRISTMAS IS ALL ABOUT, Charlie Brown.

Glory to God in the highest! AMEN.