

McCabe United Methodist Church
“God Came to Us!”
December 24, 2013:Christmas Eve Services
Pastor Rick Fossum

Did you hear what happened to this one pastor on Christmas day? The pastor had invited all the children to come up front during his *Children’s Time*. He asked them this question or riddle, **“What has four legs, is sometimes gray and sometimes red, has a bushy tail, likes to eat nuts and enjoys jumping from tree to tree?”**

The kids were kind of shy and didn’t say anything. Finally, one little boy raised his hand and said, **“Well, it sounds like a squirrel to me, but this being a church and all, and it is Christmas, I’m thinking the right answer has to be ‘Jesus’!”**

Merry Christmas. On this day, Christians from all over the world are gathering to worship and celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. Emmanuel. God with us. It’s what we Christians call the *Good News*. It’s the day when God came to us.

The angels sang about the *Good News* in their song to the shepherds on that first Christmas day long ago. **“Glory to God in the highest heaven,”** they sang, **“and on earth peace and good will to all.”**

A couple of years ago on *America’s Funniest Home Videos* on TV, there was a video of a young boy. It was Christmas morning. The video begins by showing this little boy running downstairs and seeing this huge present beside the tree. It had his name on it. Like we’ve all done, he tore it open to see what was inside. The paper went flying everywhere and suddenly he broke into a dance and started jumped around the room and shouting and then he yelled, **“Wow! Just what I wanted! I really love it! Wow! ”**

And then, the video ends when the little boy gets this sober and serious look on his face and he goes over to his present and looks at it again, and then he asks, **“What is it?”**

Two thousand years ago, God sent our world a gift. Mary knew what this gift was and so did Joseph and so did the angels and so did the shepherds. They knew that God had done a new thing. They knew that this was the day when God would become one of us. Unlike the little boy, **“This gift was exactly what our world needed.”**

From the richest of us to the poorest, from the oldest to the youngest, from white to black to every color, God sent Jesus Christ into the world to walk with us and to talk with us and to teach us and to forgive us and to love us. This is *Good News* for everyone!

Author and United Methodist Pastor Bill Hinson, in his book *Solid Living in a Shattered World* tells a story about a Christmas gift he and his wife gave to their daughter, Cathy one year.

They gave their daughter a cute little puppy for Christmas. It's what Cathy wanted. She named her puppy Happy because he was such a happy little thing.

Pastor Hinson had even built a dog house for Happy before Christmas as part of the gift. But, when he showed the dog house to Happy, well, Happy the dog wasn't happy. He didn't like the dog house. Not a bit! Maybe it was too big or too tall or too something, but Happy didn't like it and refused to go near it. In fact, when they picked him up and put him inside, Happy would run right back out, shaking and scared.

The family tried everything to help Happy like it: They tried pleading with him, bribing him, threatening him, tricking him, but nothing worked. Happy was not going inside that dog house.

One day, Pastor Hinson was looking out the kitchen window when he saw something he couldn't believe. He saw Happy, with his tail wagging, walk right into the dog house and lay down. Like I said, Pastor Hinson couldn't believe it. He went outside to investigate.

Do you know what he found?

His daughter, Cathy, had crawled inside the dog house and laid down. Apparently, when Happy saw her go inside and lay down . . . well, he must have figured the dog house couldn't be all that bad and he did the same.

Cathy showed him the way. She knew Happy needed some help. She went to him and helped him and she did it out of love.

Does this story sound familiar? This is what God did for us on that very first Christmas. God came into the world because we needed help. God came to us in the shape and form of a little baby. It was God's way of saying to all of us, **"I love you. I care about you. And I'm here to stay."**

And so every year, about this same time, we celebrate the day when God in Jesus Christ came to us and showed us a way of life and a way of love that the world had never seen before and as a result of that visit, the world was changed forever.

And so tonight, we celebrate by thanking God for sending us the gift of all gifts, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Now, this is *Good News!* Do I hear an *Amen?*