



## The Best Part of Christmas

### Hebrews 1:1-9 (NIV84)

<sup>1</sup> In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, <sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. <sup>3</sup> The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. <sup>4</sup> So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs. <sup>5</sup> For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father"? Or again, "I will be his Father, and he will be my Son"? <sup>6</sup> And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him." <sup>7</sup> In speaking of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire." <sup>8</sup> But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom. <sup>9</sup> You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy."

For all of us here on Christmas Day, we are still basking a bit in the glow of Christmas Eve, aren't we? Although there is no Luke 2 being read this morning while singing *Silent Night* and holding candles, all the Christmas characters are running through our head.

There were those angels. How their appearance must have lit up the night! And to think about hearing that sweet angel song, "Gloria in excelsis Deo." And you know that you just want to sing it again!

And those shepherds. I wonder how long they stood staring into the sky until the first one said, "Hey, let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." And then, after having seen that baby wrapped in clothes and lying in a manger, they had to go out and tell everyone they could find. That's their first instinct. Let's tell more people about this Jesus Child, the one who is the fulfillment of promises, the one who will save us all!

Aside from the shepherds, we think about those wisemen on the camels, Jesus' visitors from the East. Although they were almost certainly not there on the first Christmas Eve (giving the chronological context of their story in the Bible) and we don't know how many came (but that they did bear three gifts), we are still thinking about them as those camels are heading right to that stable scene guided by that brilliant, beautiful star. They're in our heads because we came to worship the boy King just as they did.

Maybe other characters still pictured in our heads are all the fuzzy animals in the stable, and how cute and cuddly they look. Maybe we think about that grouchy innkeeper, the one who isn't really a character in the Christmas story, but we make him one because you know that someone had to tell the pregnant lady that there was no room for them. And there's even Caesar Augustus who God used to issue that decree that made Mary & Joseph head South to Bethlehem so that Jesus could be born there as promised.

And how could we be overlooking the holy couple – Mary and Joseph. Mary was incredible to simply accept the impossible being done to her as the Angel Gabriel announced that she would give birth to promised Savior of the world, a child who was and is truly the Son of God and also truly human at the same time. She believed this even as all this while she was still a virgin. We are still amazed that her response to all this taking place was, "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said." (Luke 1:38) And then there's Joseph, who never says anything, but always does what God wants him to do. God says that the child that Mary is carrying is from the Holy Spirit; take her as your wife. Joseph does it. God will communicate with Joseph a number of times after Jesus' birth telling him how to keep Jesus safe, and Joseph always did it. Such an admirable couple of role models for the Christian faith.

Is that all the Christmas story characters? Are we forgetting any of them? Of course, we are. How could you forget the baby Jesus?! He's the one who ties the whole thing together, doesn't he? Gives everyone else a cute baby to focus on.

But we are here because that baby is so much more than a set piece to the Christmas story. In fact all the people we just mentioned are more than interesting characters to a story. Christmas is real life; it actually happened just as we celebrated last night in our Luke 2 reading. And to top that off, this Child, who is central to the whole Christmas story, is even bigger than that. That's what the author of this letter to the Hebrews wants his readers to know, and this what we hear on Christmas Day: Jesus is the best part of Christmas.

That's how his letter starts out: "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son." (verses 1-2) God has talked to you in the past, and now he is talking again, and he is using the absolute best when it comes to communicating with us. Listen to this extensive list of reasons of why Jesus is the best. The Son is the one "whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven." (verses 2-3)

How does that make Jesus the best part of Christmas? Like we heard last night, he is more than a helpless baby. He is the Son of God. It was through him that the world was made. That's what John told us in our Gospel reading. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made." (John 1:1-3) After the world was made through him, he also went about sustaining the world and all things by his powerful Word. This is the same Word that said "Let there be" and there was. This is the same Word that promised immediately after humankind sinned and destroyed their perfection that God would give someone who would come to destroy the devil's work, the same Word that defeated Satan himself during Jesus' temptations, and the same word that gives eternal life in heaven to all who believe it. His powerful Word gives us eternal life because Jesus provided purification for our sins. He was and is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. That is what that Child in Bethlehem went on to do. And now, this God who made all things, sustains all things with his Word, who is God, and has provided purification of sins also has sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven meaning that he is in control and in power over all things. This is the Babe in the manger, Jesus, who does all this.

Without that Christ Child at the center of the Christmas story, what do the rest of the characters even matter? Without Jesus, Mary and Joseph get forgotten in the annals of history. Without Jesus, the innkeeper has no one to turn away. The wisemen would have found only King Herod and not the King of Kings. The shepherds would have had nothing to tell. The angels would have had nothing to sing. More than that. Not only does the nativity scene break down without Jesus, but without the Christ Child then there is no purification from sins. And that wouldn't matter either because without the Son of God, there also is no universe, no creation, no us. Without the Baby Jesus, there is nothing. Jesus is the best part of the Christmas story because without him none of it happens.

Jesus is not just the best part of Christmas because he makes that cherished story happen. All those qualifications that the author to the Hebrews already listed for the Son of God, he uses them not just so that we have those awesome Christmas characters, but he uses them with you and me. Feel like life is out of control, that you have no power over anything? You have a Savior, a mediator who sits at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven, in charge of all things. If anyone can change an out of control life, it's him. Wondering why you are here? It's because he made you. He carefully, thoughtfully, purposefully put you on this world, and not just to exist, but to know him and his love for you.

Feeling guilty and judged because you've failed to keep promises this Christmas, said things that split the family up or dug the trenches deeper in the war of words instead of coming together as we think a family should at Christmas? The Son has provided purification from your sins. You have been cleansed by the Christ Child. You are guilty no more. Ask your family to forgive you as Christ has and begin mending those splits with his love for you.

Does God feel impersonal and distant to you? Well, the Son of God, who is also God, is the exact representation of his being. To know the Father is to know the Son. The more you follow Jesus in the Bible, the more you get to know who he is, what he does, how he acts. God wants you to get to know him better; that's why he gave us the Bible, his powerful, sustaining Word.

And it is that same Word of God that uplifts us when we are down. We may need those promises of comfort and joy when we don't feel the most chipper around Christmas. We need to hear that someone loves us unconditionally and will never leave us nor forsake us. We need to know that there is hope right now and after this life, and that comes from the Son of God.

All these things, they just keep adding up to a point we hopefully already knew before coming here this morning: The Son is the best part of Christmas. Maybe we do lose Jesus a bit in all the other interesting people in the Christmas story. Maybe we gravitate to those other people because they are strictly human like us. Maybe we want to see Christmas through their eyes. We want to see the Savior of the world as a babe in the manger. We all want to see the best part of Christmas.

For us, it always will be unequivocally, the Son. No one else can match him. The Son created us along with the universe, he has allowed us to get to know God by what he does, he sustains us with his powerful word, he rules all things at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven, and he purifies us from our sins. The Son is the best part of Christmas. Amen.