

This message was delivered following a sermon entitled “Come to the Stable” where various individuals came to the stable to see the infant Jesus, and to deal with the problems before them. This message then is a response for the average person who is called to come to the stable. The bold, italicized texts are parts that were read by an individual offstage. My thanks go to Mike Jacobs who read those parts.

“Go To the Stable”

Titus 2:11-14

December 24, 2011 Early Service

Why would I want to go to a stable? I mean, what would I want to see in a stable? And it’s not even a stable like we think about a stable, with four walls and a door or two. No! This stable is just a little cave. Rock walls. And once you get in there, there’s no where to go, and only one way out. Just a stupid little cave where they can keep some animals. Can you imagine how cold and messy and stinky that place has to be? I’m not even sure that you could give me enough money to clean out a stable, to clean it to the extent where someone would even want to take a baby. And yet there is the urging to “Go to the Stable to See the Baby.” A baby born in a stable. That’s disgusting. Poor kid. He’ll probably amount to absolutely nothing. Born in a stable. You got to be kidding. There is no way that I want to be part of this manipulation of humanity, where they put a baby on display.

“Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

Afraid. I’m not afraid. Who would be afraid to go to a stable to see a baby? Of course hearing from an angel, that’s a little freaky. But why should I go to a stable just because an angel told me to go? I hear the shepherds went, but they’re shepherds. No one can take them seriously, can they? I mean, shepherds. They’re like the bottom rung of society. “I can’t get a job anywhere else so I guess I’ll be a shepherd.” Yeah, that’s the example I want to follow. The fact that shepherds might be there is a good reason not to go. I can see it now. They sucker me into this cave with no way out, and their friends mug me. That would be something a shepherd would do. Go to the stable indeed.

Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.”

Magi, huh? They are supposed to be pretty knowledgeable people. A lot of education. A lot of smarts. Some people call them wise. Maybe I ought to think about this stable thing a little bit more. I mean if magi went there. But wait a minute. They went because they saw a star. They followed a star. How do you follow star? Yeah, I know that sailors will use stars help them navigate where they are going, but to think that a star led them, moved in front of them and stopped over this one cave of a stable, that’s a little hard to believe. What sort of education did they really have? And they came from the east. They were foreigners, not like me. Maybe they were fooled into going to a stable, but I’m smarter than that. I don’t care what they thought the

heavens foretold. It doesn't make sense to me. I don't see why I should go to the stable.

But you know, the shepherds and the magi weren't the only ones. We've seen a few others, like Francine and Ben; we've seen Michael, and Katherine and Louise. They all seemed to have benefitted from the experience. But then, they all needed something. They were all hurting. They were weak. They needed to go to that stable. Not me. There's nothing wrong with me. I don't need to see this special baby. I don't need to go to the stable.

Sorry. I guess that sounded a little bit arrogant and judgmental, like I was putting down those people who needed to go to the stable. I don't need to go. It might be okay to go. I mean, if there is this amazing celebrity right in my own back yard. It would be foolish to not take advantage of the opportunity. If the President came to my neighborhood, I'd probably go to see him. Well, maybe not the President. But someone important like Kim Kardashian, I'd go see her. So maybe I ought to go. Who knows? I might be able to get a souvenir or an autograph. I wonder what an autograph from Jesus would be worth on e-bay? Wait a minute; what am I saying? A baby can't sign his name. And how do you authenticate a signature from Joseph or Mary? No. That probably won't work. But it doesn't matter. I don't need to go to the stable. After all, I'm a good person. I'm good just the way I am.

And Jesus said, “There is only One who is good.”

Only One, huh? And I guess that One is God. Well, you got me there. I am not God. Sometimes my wife thinks that I think that I am God, but I don't. I know I have done a few wrong things. But they weren't real big things. Maybe I didn't always tell the whole truth, but it wasn't like I was a liar or anything. And ok, maybe I have looked at other women now and then, but there's no harm in looking is there? Well, everyone cheats on their taxes a little bit. It's not like I'm actually stealing. But God will know that I have done a lot more good than bad. On the whole, it will be okay. I'll be acceptable to God.

And Paul said “For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.”

No, no, that can't be right. You don't really think that I'm a sinner, do you? I mean, I'm a fine upstanding member of the community. I support all the right causes. I give to the right charities. I go to church all the time. Well maybe not all the time. A fellow has to work. And I need to take some time off, for rest and recreation. But when I'm not away, I'm here. Okay, there were a few times when I was up late and decided to sleep in. And when the weather is bad I skip worship. Who wants to go out on a rainy, snowy day? And I guess I missed a few times when the weather was too good. Who wants to waste a beautiful day by sitting inside a church? But it's not like I don't know Jesus. He's my man. I mean, He's my God. He's my Lord.

And Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to me ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of

Heaven.”

But I’m different. Certainly God knows me? I was born in this church. I grew up in this church. My family was part of the original congregation. And there has never been a time when my family was not represented in the church. There is a plaque to my great grandfather on the wall. We paid for the bell. Jesus certainly walked with my mother and grandmother. It is my birthright to be here, to be a good, influential member of the church. And certainly that will get me into heaven, into the kingdom of God. I shouldn’t have to go to the stable.

And the prophets said, “Do not begin to say that ‘Abraham is our Father.’” “Every living soul belongs to me, your soul and the soul of all your ancestors. And the soul that sins is the one that will die.”

Will die? How can this be? I have trusted in my good character and you tell me that no one is good enough to get into heaven? I have trusted in my position in the community, and you tell me that it accounts for nothing? I trusted in my good deeds and it’s not enough? I’ve trusted in my heritage and my family and you say that counts for nothing? I trusted in my church membership, and even that leaves me in the cold, or maybe in the heat, in the fire and all that? I thought I earned my way into heaven, and I can’t? All these things that I trusted, my money and prestige, my family and my works, my contributions and my church, when it is all stripped away, all I’m left with is my sin. Lord, I am a sinner, nothing but a sinner. What can I hold on to now? Where can I find hope?

At just the right time, when we were powerless and weak, Christ died for you, a sinner. Jesus came for you. Go to the stable.

Unto me a Savior is born? You came for me? You died for me? O Lord. All my life I have been trusting in myself, in what I could do, in what I could provide. I thought I had been walking in Your light. Now I discover that I have been in darkness my entire life. I did not know what light was, I did not know what love was until I looked to you. I guess that no one really knows until they come to you. I do need you in my life. I need your love and your light. Now I know why I have to come to the stable, that I might come into your light. Now I know why you are called Wonderful, Counselor, Lord of Lords and Prince of Peace. For you are Emmanuel, God with us. You are God with me. All this time I thought it was all dependent on what I do, but this day, this night is all about the gift of giving yourself for me, giving yourself to me. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. Because you come, if I believe, I will not perish but have eternal life. You did not come to condemn the sinners, not even me, even though I have earned that punishment, but you came that I might find salvation in you and through you. And all I have to do is receive the gift. All I have to do is come to you, to stay with you, to stay in the garden; to stay with you at the cross. All I have to do is to come to you, to come to the stable.