

Sermon: December 21, 2008

“Hello, Angel Gabriel”

*“The Holy Spirit will come upon you ... the power of the most high will overshadow you ...
the child to be born will be holy.”*

The angel’s words to Mary ... when she discovered she was “with child” ... and she was confused.
I wonder ... after all these years ... could these words be for us, too??

*You are looking for a job ... resume after resume ... no call backs ... and you begin to doubt yourself.

*Another round of chemo ... will it ever end?

*It’s your first Christmas without your mom, without your dad ... without your wife or husband.

*For the first time ... you can’t afford to buy what you want for those you love.

*Your sister had emergency surgery ... you worry and you wonder.

Yes, wouldn’t it feel good ... if in the middle of what you’re going through ...
*the Holy Spirit would come upon you ... the power of the most high overshadows you ...
and you know deep inside your heart ----- it’s gonna be ok.*

My guess is ... each of us has had a “defining moment” or two ... reminding us of the true meaning of
Christmas. The other day at Bible study ... Craig had us go around the table ... and share a moment where we
discovered the true meaning of the season.

I reminisced about a Christmas almost 20 years ago. I call it CBJ --- “Christmas before Jude.”
It was late Saturday night ... December 23. I lived in my house ----- with my two boys. A typical “single man
with kids” house: the living and dining room was a soccer field. No furniture and a ‘frig with cold beer.

I did have a Christmas tree ... but I couldn’t get the lights to work.

So ----- at 9:30 ... Saturday night ... two days before Christmas ... I found myself in aisle 3 at K-Mart.

There are not a lot of happy people in K-Mart --- 2 nights before Christmas.

I’m thinking to myself: “This is not the way Christmas is supposed to be.”

I saw the weariness in peoples’ eyes ... tiredness in their steps ... I felt the loneliness in my heart.

I realized anew ----- life isn’t always the way we want it to be.

And ... it’s in moments like these ... that we need to hear the voice of the angel Gabriel.

Yes ----- parts of our lives often fall short of expectations.

Families. Jobs. Churches. State Government.

Our hopes and dreams. Our journey. Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

Final exams. Small businesses. Two days before Christmas.

Yes, there is a whole bunch of stuff that doesn’t go the way we want it to.

Yet ... in the midst of this ----- God’s spirit is always with us ... the “power of the most high” (the same
power that was with Mary) becomes our power.

Christmas is not just about the birth of Jesus.

It’s about the birth of something special and unique ---- inside of our hearts everyday.

--- when you go to chemo ... the angel Gabriel is there.

--- when you have Communion with your dad ... and he doesn’t know who you are ...

and you wonder where “this journey” is going ... the angel Gabriel is there.

--- when your basketball team is 0 – 10 ... and you are tempted to “cash it in” ... the angel Gabriel is there.

--- when you are in aisle 3 of K-Mart just before Christmas, feeling alone ... the angel Gabriel is there.

--- when you look at your resume ... and you don’t ever want to send it out again ... the angel Gabriel is there.

It’s easy ... in these tough times ... to be cynical.

It’s tempting to pull back ... to be afraid to give anything to anyone or anything ...

It's easy to use tough times as an excuse to quit making commitments to what is good and important in life. Yes ----- being afraid of what tomorrow will bring ... well, it can turn us into someone we really don't want to be.

Well ... we may not have "much" ... but Christmas reminds us: we have more to give than we ever thought possible. No matter what your resume says:
No words ... no job ... can ever capture what's inside your soul.
Your passion.
Your dreams.
All you care about ... the people and causes you love.

CHRISTMAS is a very spiritual, universal holiday. It's captivating.
Christmas is not about "being Christian" ... it's about being **BOLDLY HUMAN**.
It's about believing in a "high power" ... invading our lives ... "scooping us up" in loving hands ...
taking what is human and ordinary and earthy ...

*like a manger,
a shepherd,
a child,*

ordinary parents ...

This power scoops us up, too ----- in aisle 3 ... Christian, Jew, atheist, and everyone in-between ...
from mangers to town-homes ...

Christmas is about living & giving & sharing & caring ----- from the very bounty and poverty
of who we are.

Christmas doesn't end this week.
It's only just begun.

Don Borling
All Saints Lutheran Church
13350 LaGrange Road
Orland Park, IL 60462
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www.allsainstjoy.com allsaintsjoy@sbcglobal.net 708-448-2939