

Pastor Chris Matthis  
Epiphany Lutheran Church, Castle Rock, Colorado  
Christmas Eve  
Monday, December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Sermon: Unto Us

Text: Luke 2:11; Isaiah 9:6

Focus: Jesus was born for all people.

Function: That they would believe in the miraculous gift of God's Son.

Structure: Multiple Stories

Locus: "I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord..." (SC, 2<sup>nd</sup> Article of Apostles' Creed).

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Amen. Hear again the words of the prophet Isaiah: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given..." (Isa. 9:6a, KJV). Amen. One of the most difficult things for a new mother to do is to allow somebody else to hold her baby. After carrying her child for nine months inside of her, it is hard to let go. The maternal instinct is strong, and she wants to protect her child from other people's clumsy hands and germy sneezes and coughs. It is difficult to believe that anyone else but her knows how to hold the baby without dropping it—including the child's father and grandparents! The baby has been inside of her for so long, that the mother may not even regard the child as her *own*, but rather as a very part of *herself*.

After our daughter, Rachel Rae, was born earlier this summer, I had to wait for what seemed an unfair and unrealistic amount of time before Lisa finally relinquished her into my arms. "Let me hold her," I kept begging, but Lisa would only smile demurely until she finally gave in to the overwhelming exhaustion of labor and let me hold our baby girl.

Being a pastor's kids, our babies probably got handed around the room a lot more than other people's. My kids never had "stranger danger," because they were always part of a bigger

family, the church community. And yet I still bristled uncomfortably when a kind old lady in my congregation once asked me, “How’s our baby doing?”

“*Our* baby”? What do you mean?! It’s *my* baby. The idea that a baby could belong to an entire congregation—or even the whole world is beyond absurd. That is one point illustrated well in one of my favorite science fiction films, *Children of Men* (2006). This movie, based on the book by P.D. James, envisions a horrific future in which no human children have been born anywhere on the planet in over 18 years. For reasons unknown to science, the entire population has become infertile. Is it the result of climate change? Pollution? A curse from God? No one knows.

The youngest person on earth, “Baby” Diego, is a young adult with world-wide celebrity status simply by virtue of being the last baby born. He seems to belong to the entire planet, but Baby Diego is troubled by all the unwanted attention. After all, he’s just an ordinary kid. So for the first time in history, humanity faces the future without a future. The youngest generation is made up entirely of adults, and in the face of such hopelessness, suicide and crime skyrocket.

The story’s protagonist is a depressed, detached university professor named “Theo” (played by Clive Owen), whose ex-wife Julia (played by Julianne Moore) approaches him with a proposition: help her smuggle a young African refugee out of England to a research station at sea. He is reluctant to help until circumstances force his hand. Only then he is amazed to discover that the young woman, named Key, is *pregnant!* For the first time in a generation, a woman is pregnant, which gives pressing importance to the baby she carries inside of her. You might even say that Key’s baby belongs to the whole world, because she carries the hope of humanity inside her tummy.

*Children of Men* is fiction. But the Christmas story is real. The reason I reference this film is to give you just a glimmer of what hope a single child could bring to the whole world. And yet that's precisely what Jesus did for us. "For unto *us* a child is born," intones the prophet Isaiah. "Unto *us* a son is given" (Isa. 9:6). The Christmas angel said as much: "For *unto you* is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11, ESV). Baby Jesus was born for everyone. Mary's child was God's gift to all humanity. And while few more than a gaggle of shepherds were ever aware of Jesus' birth, he was of infinitely greater importance for us than Key's baby was to the movie's nightmarish world of a childless tomorrow.

For whether we realize it or not, the world had been waiting for Jesus ever since Adam and Eve's fall into sin. Because of our first parents' rebellion against God, we all came under a curse far worse than infertility: the curse of sin and death. "For the wages of sin is death..." (Rom. 6:23a). Yet all the way back in Genesis 3:15, God promised that Eve's offspring, a child, would defeat the devil once and for all. The serpent would bruise the baby's heel, but that same child would crush the head of the serpent. All through the centuries, from generation to generation, humanity waited for the answer to this one great hope—the answer to all our prayers, the one who would save us from our sins and rescue us from "the hopes and fears of all the years."

When Mary gave birth to Jesus on that first Christmas night in Bethlehem, his shrill cries announced the arrival of Immanuel, God-with-us. Rather than abandoning us to our own devices and the curse of sin, God chose to be born as a little baby to live among us and rescue us from our sins—and ourselves. Jesus was the eternal Son of God. He was also Mary's baby. But he

was given to the whole world. He was given *for you and me!* “Unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given.”

I wonder how much of this the shepherds understood when the angel announced the Savior’s birth. “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger” (Luke 2:11-12). After they went to Bethlehem to see “this thing that has happened,” I wonder how they approached the manger. Did they hasten with eager joy, or did they hesitate with holy reverence and awe?

In *Children of Men*, there is a remarkable scene after Key’s baby is born. The odd trio of Theo, Key, and the baby try to make way through a dangerous battlefield. They desperately try to keep the baby quiet so that they don’t draw fire or unwanted attention during their escape. But all of a sudden, the baby’s cry cuts loose, and *everyone* hears the miraculous sound of a crying baby for the first time in nearly 20 years. Fighters on both sides stop firing and watch in wonder as this wholly unexpected family passes by. For a moment there is peace on earth. But after the baby passes, the moment moves on, and the fighting resumes.

You cannot approach Jesus’ manger in the same way. Face to face with the holy stranger, humanity’s last hope and only hope, you can’t just turn away and get on with your day or life in the same way as before. You must either reject him or accept him. I hope you will believe and receive—and not be deceived. You cannot blithely disregard the Son of God who was born for *all* the children of men.

Without Christ, there is no hope for humanity, no future for the children of men. Christ was born to us all, unto us all he was given, in order that we all might find a Savior from our sins.

I have one more movie for you: *The Nativity Story*, which stars Keira Castle-Hughes as the virgin Mary and Oscar Isaac (known to many as Po Dameron) as Joseph, her fiancé. In the manger scene, after Jesus is born, the shepherds come to see the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes. They want to reach out and touch him, but they are afraid until Mary smiles and says, “He belongs to *all* mankind!” Then she pushes him into the arms of a grizzled old sheep herder. And the joy on his face is almost indescribable. A baby for the whole world! Immanuel, God-with-us! “For unto *us* a child is born; unto *us* a son is given” (Isa. 9:6, KJV). Dear friends, Jesus came *for you*. Jesus was born to die *for you*. Jesus belongs to *you*. “For unto *you* is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11). May he be born in your heart tonight. In the name of Jesus, Amen.