

From Pastor Dan

Can a story provide truth without being true? I definitely think it can. What is more likely to have a significant impact on your life; a true story or the truth of the story? Again, I am going with truth. Okay Pastor Dan, what is this “true” / “truth” business all about? Well, the relevance of a story speaking truth without being literally true is quite germane to the Christmas season and the Christmas story of Jesus.

You see, the story of Jesus is first told in the Bible by Paul in the epistles. Paul is pretty short on historical information. Instead, he emphasizes a theological understanding of Jesus. For example, when it comes to writing of Jesus’ birth, all Paul has to say is that Jesus was, “...born of a woman, born under the law...” (Galatians 4:4) Chronologically, the next person to write of Jesus was the author of the Gospel of Mark who has absolutely nothing to say about the birth of Jesus. Mark begins not in Bethlehem but rather in the river Jordan with Jesus being baptized by John. The last gospel to be written, the Gospel of John, doesn’t have anything to say about Jesus’ birth either. John begins not with the birth of Jesus but rather with the birth of the universe, “In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.” (John 1:1) So, that leaves us with Matthew and Luke.

Luke is the more familiar of the two stories and is the one we typically read on Christmas Eve. In this version, Mary and Joseph live in Nazareth and are called to Bethlehem because “...all the world should be registered.” They find no room in the inn, have the baby Jesus in a stable, and are visited by angels and shepherds. After the baby Jesus is dedicated at the Temple in nearby Jerusalem, the family returns to their home in Nazareth. It’s a great story with much truth when thoughtfully read and pondered.

The other story from Matthew is quite different. In this one, Mary and Joseph live in Bethlehem where Jesus is born, apparently in their home. The wise men hear of the birth and follow a star to Bethlehem where they pay homage to the newborn king. King Herod also hears of this newborn king and in a jealous rage orders the killing of all the children in and around Bethlehem who are two years old or under. Joseph is forewarned in a dream and escapes with Mary and Jesus to Egypt. After the death of King Herod, an angel again speaks to Joseph and tells him it is okay to return to Israel but to avoid Bethlehem. So, Mary, Joseph, and Jesus instead make their home in Nazareth. Another great story with much truth when thoughtfully read and pondered.

Hmmmmmm...So, we have no birth story from Paul, Mark, or John. And the stories of the birth of Jesus in Matthew and Luke are dramatically different. What do we do with that information? Does that mean that our manger scenes shouldn't include wise men? Or if we do have wise men in our Christmas nativity scenes, do they have to be gathered around Jesus' crib in the upstairs bedroom? Of, course not!

The Christmas story as told through the figures in a traditional nativity scene or in the innocence of a Children's Christmas program provide us with a marvelous message of a transforming life coming into the world. You see, we will most likely never encounter the historical facts of the birth of Jesus Christ as portrayed in a "true" story...that's okay. Because what really matters (and it does really matter) is that we encounter a story that speaks the truth, the truth of Jesus Christ; the truth that will set you free. And I can think of no better Christmas story than that.

Merry Christmas,

Pastor Dan

“Council Corner”

Erin Randall, Evangelism

On December 2, St. John will be hosting the free Sunday Community Supper at First Presbyterian Church. This is an outreach opportunity to provide a hot meal on Sundays in the downtown Wausau area. Since January 2006, First Presbyterian Church has been offering a Sunday meal with the help of Ecumenical partners and community groups.

We are looking for volunteers to help prepare the meal (3:00-4:00 pm), serve the meal (4:00-5:15), and of course we'll need a cleanup crew (5:15-6:00). If you are available to help, please contact Erin Randall (715-212-3720).

If you are unable to join us, please consider donating items for dessert. These can be dropped off at St. John's the morning of December 2.

All are welcome to join us for the meal served from 4:00-5:00 p.m. Please consider participating in this community outreach event.

Worship Schedule

9:00 a.m. Sunday Mornings

Please join us as we worship our Lord!

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Council Members. Here is a list of Council Members. Please contact them with any concerns or issues you may have. Council meets once a month and welcomes input from the congregation.

President: Randy Trulen – 715-675-4091; rtrulen@gmail.com

Vice President: Sue Cooley – 715-675-8566; 715-571-4057l cooley1512@outlook.com

Treasurer: Curt Cooley – 715-675-8566; 715-571-4057; usfcool@gmail.com

Secretary: Tammi Smith – 715-581-3892; tammism79@gmail.com;
tammism@aspirus.org

Trustees: Lee Sillars – 715-218-5041; lsillars@aol.com

Scott Oestreich – 715-675-4360; scottsmachinellc@gmail.com

Evangelism: Erin Randall – 715-212-3720; emrandal@mtu.edu

Fellowship: John Marquardt – 715-675-3300; johnnym54401@gmail.com

Education: Connie Nowak – 715-675-1577; 715-432-3837; bcdenowak@gmail.com

Worship: Heidi Teske – 715-551-4485; heidi.teske2007@gmail.com

New Council Members Needed. We are looking for a trustee, vice president and fellowship chairperson. If you have any interest in any of these positions see Sue Cooley, Randy Knapp or Marilyn Grunenwald. Please consider this – it is fun and a needed part of our church!

Mission Statement: “We are called to serve God; serve each other; serve the community; serve the wider church.”

Serve God through worship, prayer, and the dedication of our lives to His kingdom.

Serve Each Other by mutual care and support to encourage everyone to fulfill their God-given potential. **Serve the Community** by making known the good news about Jesus and the love of God by word and deed. **Serve the Wider Church** through prayer and practical support to help spread the good news about Jesus throughout the world.

Homebound Parishioners. The following parishioners are no longer able to consistently attend worship services. I visit them to remind them that they are loved by God and loved by their community of faith, St. John. Sometimes it is helpful to hear those reminders from someone in addition to me.

Ann Kieckhafer
1347 Crystal Avenue
Room 236-1
Naperville, IL 60563

Ellen Kruit
1821 N. 4th Avenue
Room 215
Wausau, WI 54401

Harriet Wanner
1240 Merrill Ave.
Apt. 2
Wausau, WI 54401

The Perfect Gift

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry said, “Love does not consist in gazing at each other but in looking outward together in the same direction.” At Christmas we celebrate God coming to earth to look outward with us in the same direction, from our perspective and experience.

Jesus was an ordinary person: He learned to talk and walk like any toddler, learned a trade from his father and acquired the habits of faith from his family. In adulthood, Jesus experienced life as we all do: the challenge of hard work, grief at a loved one’s death, heartache over oppression and the world’s great needs — but also joy in celebration, fellowship with neighbors and deep friendship.

God personally knows our every experience, emotion and need — because Jesus, while fully divine, lived as a full human being. He has gazed at the world, life and even death from our direction, giving us the perfect Christmas gift: love.

Reminder! If you are in the hospital and would like Pastor Dan to visit, **PLEASE CALL** and let him know. Because of privacy issues, the hospital will not notify him or the church that you are there.

Food Pantry. The food items collected for the food pantry will be donated to Maine School. Your donations are appreciated. If you are able to help out with delivering these items to the school, please contact the church office.

Council Meeting Minutes. Copies of the minutes from the most recently held Council meeting are by the mailboxes. Please feel free to pick up a copy. If more are needed, please contact the church office.

Announcements. If you would like to have an announcement included in our weekly bulletin or newsletter, please submit the information in writing and put it in either Pastor Dan's mailbox or the administrative assistant's mailbox located in the narthex. If it is more convenient for you, you can submit your announcements via e-mail to stjohnwausau@msn.com. The deadline for submitting announcements for the Sunday bulletin is the Thursday before by 9:00 a.m. The deadline for the newsletter is indicated on the monthly calendar.

While waiting ...

Advent does not lead to nervous tension stemming from expectation of something spectacular about to happen. On the contrary, it leads to a growing inner stillness and joy allowing me to realize that he for whom I am waiting has already arrived and speaks to me in the silence of my heart.

Just as a mother feels the child grow in her and is not surprised on the day of the birth, but joyfully receives the one she learned to know during her waiting, so Jesus can be born in my life slowly and steadily and be received as the one I learned to know while waiting.

December Birthdays

12-1 Drew Detert
12-1 Brenda Tesch
12-3 Tom Ohrmundt
12-4 Robbie Haroldson
12-5 Ryder Schindler
12-5 Hudson Voigt
12-5 Jan Ziebell
12-6 Dan Detert
12-7 Sarah Sala
12-10 Laverne Grunenwald
12-10 Tari Harter
12-11 Maci Landwehr
12-12 Avery Oestreich
12-14 Levi Ohrmundt
12-14 Luke Saari
12-16 Mark Anderson
12-16 Marilyn Grunenwald
12-17 Lane Hoeft
12-17 John Rakow
12-18 Veronica LaVake
12-18 Pete Seubert
12-18 Serena Ugoretz
12-19 Andrew Harter
12-20 Braxtin Borth
12-22 Rebecca Voelker
12-23 Madison Voelker
12-24 Cherish Oestreich
12-24 Jacob Paulsen
12-25 Barb Nass
12-27 Deb Maley
12-28 James LaVake
12-29 Sue Cooley
12-29 Alex Zahn
12-30 Jesse Hein
12-30 Luciana Nass
12-30 Tammi Walter

December Anniversaries

12-5 Tom & Karen Ohrmundt
12-6 John Czarnota & Erin Randall
12-11 Don & Carol Prochnow
12-21 Duane & Patsy Askew
12-26 Bob & Kara Rode
12-29 Chad & Tammi Walter
12-30 Mike Kluetz & Sue Harris