

From Pastor Karen's Desk

December 2008

We think of the Christmas story from the Bible as a unified whole. We see the Christmas Card or Christmas Pageant version - with angels and shepherds and wise men and camels all elbowing for space in a small stable lit by a star. When we think about the beginning of the story of Jesus, this is the way we like to tell it. But not all the gospel writers told it that way. As a matter of fact, none of them told it quite like the way I just described. Luke places the birth in a stable, but only Matthew has a star and wise men. Mark ignores the birth all together, finding the most important beginning point at Jesus' baptism as an adult. And John likes to start the story all the way back in the cosmic light of the creation of the world. They each tell about the beginning differently because each has a different part of Jesus' life and significance they want to emphasize. Each also draws from their own heritage and history in telling the story. Each paints a bit different portrait of the Jesus whose coming we celebrate at Christmas.

Curious? Come to worship during Advent. Each of the four Sundays of Advent we will tell the story of the beginning of Jesus' life from a different Gospel's point of view, beginning with Mark's close-up that features the short, intense, and very human life story, then backing up through Matthew's interest in Jesus as a Jewish messiah, then further back to Luke's focus on Jesus coming for the entire world, and finally to John's embrace of Jesus' significance for the entire universe. Each Sunday will also have something of the tone of the Gospel we're talking about. For example, Luke's Sunday is also our annual Lessons and Carols service - have you ever noticed how much singing goes on in the first few chapters of Luke? I think of it as "The Gospel According to Rogers and Hammerstein." We'll celebrate that with a lot of singing of our own.

This Advent, begin your preparations for Christmas by returning to the beginning - again, and again, and again.