

The Rev. Jimmy Abbott  
December 24, 2011  
Christmas Eve  
Luke 2:1-20

### **Security Blankets**

As a child, I had the perfect, cuddly, brown teddy bear. Because I couldn't properly say "teddy," I called him "Teedle." When I heard something go *bump* in the night, I clutched Teedle for protection. When I was sick, Teedle's soft and fuzzy body comforted me. When my family moved from Los Angeles to Dallas, and everything changed, Teedle was my constant pal. Without that perfect, cuddly brown teddy bear, I would have been lost and scared. Teedle was my security blanket.

Poor, poor Teedle. I loved that little bear so much, that he was always losing his stuffing. When I wasn't looking, my mom would snatch Teedle away, make a small cut, stuff him full again, and sew him back up. Then she would place him back on my bed and pretend that nothing had ever happened. It was an endless cycle. But poor, poor Teedle couldn't handle all those re-creations. He lost all his fur. His stitches came apart. The more I clutched him, the more my mother stuffed him, the more fragile he became. Poor, poor Teedle.

This is way it is with all our false security blankets – even as grown ups we carry around Teedles of a different sort. We fret about our bank accounts, spending money on things we don't need, and then worry how to stuff those accounts full again. We worry about our reputations, so we put on our happy faces, and hide our real selves. We trust in things, which moth and rust destroy, and which thieves break in and steal. It's an unholy cycle that never ends. We carry around our security blankets, use them up, tear them up, and pretend as if everything is fine, as if nothing ever happened. This is the story that we have seen played out time and time again. It is the world's story – a story of greed, envy, and most of all, fear.

But that is not the story we read this blessed night. You have not come to St. Alban's church to hear that story – the story of false security. You have come to hear the only story that matters, the story that changes lives. Tonight's story, the story of our Lord's birth is not about angels, shepherds, and donkeys. Tonight's story is an invitation, an invitation for us to throw out our false security blankets, and to live as followers of Jesus.

Some two thousand years ago, in the hills of Judea, there were certain poor shepherds keeping watch over their flocks by night. When lo! out of the darkness shone a heavenly light with an angelic message: "Do not be afraid; for see – I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Christ, the Lord." The shepherds, so inspired by the angelic host left their flocks and made haste to visit Jesus. It was there, in a manger in Bethlehem, that those shepherds experienced the salvation of God. They saw that true peace does not come from sheep, or income, or reputation, or ruler, or anything else this world can offer. They saw that true peace is from God, even the God who chooses to be born in a barn.

This good news of great joy is still news. The good news of great joy is being published this holy night around the world in churches, chapels, and cathedrals of all sorts. With billions of Christians around the world, we hear again the angelic cry: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" Every false security blanket – every reputation, bank account, job, and ruler – should tremble at this news. For it is tonight, this holy night, when we hear again that it is God, and God's only Son, that saves us, and that gives us peace.

If you are tired of your grown up security blankets failing you; if you have noticed that no matter how hard you work, things fall apart; if you are sick of restuffing Teedle again and

again and again; then you have come to the right place. It is here, in God's Church, that you can leave behind your security blankets in the hills of Judea, and experience the salvation of God.

I only make such a bold statement, but I see this every day. The good people of St. Alban's have made a practice of tossing out our old security blankets. Every day, we listen to the good news of Jesus Christ which saves us from fear and selfishness. In our "Furaha Friday" partnership with Wesley United Methodist Church, we host their children from East Waco in our Parish Hall for a Christian education program and dinner. Some of the people at St. Alban's have been saved from the selfish comfort of a Friday evening by providing dinner for those hungry children. Some have been saved from the perceived security of the United States, and will go on a mission to our partners in southern Malawi. Parents have been saved from their shyness by actually teaching their children about their faith in Jesus. Every day, I see somebody else put away their childish things, their security blankets, and pick up the cross to follow Jesus.

Because that is where this story goes. Our sweet little baby Jesus doesn't lie in a manger and swaddling clothes forever. The road from the manger leads to the cross, where Jesus dies a terrible death, as naked as he was on that very first Christmas day.

"Behold, I bring you good news of great joy." Poor, poor Teedle, and along with him every job, reputation, and ruler are shown to be false in the full light of the heavenly host. You are no longer slaves to your security blankets. You are set free, by our Lord's cross and manger – free to worship and follow Christ Jesus.