

多一個耶穌！

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日期：2018 年 12 月 24 日

節期：聖誕夜

經文：路加福音 2:1-20

歡迎參加一年一度的聖誕夜蠟燭禮拜，聆聽耶穌降生的故事。剛剛從司會口中聽到一篇聖誕故事，相信大家都不陌生。我說那是「一篇聖誕故事」(a Christmas story)，而不是「聖誕故事」(the Christmas story)，是因為根本沒有「決定版」的聖誕故事。《新約聖經》事實上有兩個聖誕故事，分別在《馬太福音》和《路加福音》。這兩個故事無論在人物、情節、信息上，都有基本的差異。比如說，只有《馬太福音》才有來自東方的星、博士和禮物、殘忍的希律王；另外一方面，只有我們今晚讀的《路加福音》，才有羅馬皇帝下令登記戶口（造家甲）、約瑟和懷孕的馬利亞在伯利恆無客館可住、耶穌降生在槽裡（無論是不是馬槽）、天使對顧羊的人報佳音。兩個聖誕故事對耶穌為何降生伯利恆、為何定居拿撒勒，也有不同的說明：《馬太福音》的設定，是約瑟一家原本就住在伯利恆，耶穌自然就在該地降生；他們是因為躲避希律王逃亡到埃及，回來之後才定居拿撒勒的。《路加福音》的設定，則是約瑟一家原本已經住在拿撒勒，是因為要登記戶口，才回到約瑟的祖籍地伯利恆，剛好馬利亞的預產期到，生下耶穌。我們平常之所以沒注意到這兩個聖誕故事的差異，是聖誕劇（Christmas Pageant）習慣將兩個故事混合成一個造成的。

我今天晚上一開始講這些，並不是要主日學以後不能演混和版的聖誕劇——請照演不誤；說真的，不是混和版的聖誕劇，沒讓東方博士和顧羊的人同台演出，還似乎不夠熱鬧呢。我講這些，只不過是要藉著指出《新約聖經》不只一個聖誕故事，讓我今天晚上有理由來為大家講另外一個聖誕故事。聖誕故事其實可以有很多，底下就是其中之一。

某年的聖誕節前一週，一位媽媽在居家附近的「一元商店」(dollar store) 買了一組「耶穌降生情景」(Nativity scene)——就是那種有顧羊的人、羊群、天使、星、東方博士帶著禮物、駱駝、約瑟、馬利亞，圍著一個馬槽，裡面嬰兒耶穌的聖誕擺設。她回家拆開包裝，發現裡面竟然有兩個嬰兒耶穌，多一個耶穌！

「一定是有人包裝錯誤了！」媽媽這樣想。她決定立刻回去商店，可是爸爸勸阻她，說同樣這組商品，全國不知有幾千幾百，分散各地；包裝錯誤很可能發生在亞洲的某個工廠，所以缺少耶穌的那組「耶穌降生情景」，不一定在商店，說不定在佛羅里達州、德州、加州。

可是媽媽堅持回去。她帶著兩個小孩回到商店，告訴店長「馬槽」裡多一個耶穌。店長的回應和爸爸講的差不多，可是媽媽死纏著店長，直到他接受她的要求，在其餘的「耶穌降生情景」盒子上，貼上一張紙條，寫著：「你若缺少嬰兒耶穌，請打這支電話。」

接下來的一整個禮拜，媽媽幾乎寸步不離家中的電話。每當電話鈴響，媽媽就說：「我想那是為了耶穌打來的！」可是沒有一通電話是。爸爸索性建議，將多出來的耶穌放回盒子裡，就當沒有這一回事。

「將嬰兒耶穌放回盒子裡？真是個爛主意！」媽媽生氣地說。「一定會有人打電話的；在那之前，我們就暫時讓兩個嬰兒耶穌同睡一個馬槽好了。」

可是到了聖誕夜下午五點，還是沒有人打電話來。媽媽著急了，吩咐爸爸「跑步到商店」，看看是否還有「耶穌降生情景」沒賣完。「你從櫥窗看進去就知道了，如果都賣完了，今夜有人非打電話不可。」

爸爸不太高興：「跑步到商店？妳腦筋壞了嗎？現在外面零下十五度耶！」

可是兩個小孩，是一對兄妹，迫不及待地接話說：「爸爸，我們陪你去！」不情願的爸爸只好和兩個小孩穿戴一身出門。

當他們快到商店的時候，哥哥一馬當先跑上前，將鼻子湊上櫥窗觀看。「都賣完了，爸爸！萬歲！所有的懸疑，今晚就要解開了！」哥哥歡呼著說。落後半條街的爸爸一聽，立刻掉頭往回走。

當三人一回到家，就發現媽媽不在，連多出來的嬰兒耶穌也不見了。

「一定是有人打電話，她出門送嬰兒耶穌去了。」爸爸這樣推論。「你們兩個小傢伙準備上床睡覺，我要去包聖誕禮物。」

突然電話鈴聲大作，爸爸大聲叫嚷：「小孩們接電話！一定是商店店長打的，告訴他我們為耶穌找到家了。」

可是打電話的是媽媽。她在電話那一頭簡短指示：全家立刻趕來 205 Chestnut St.，帶三條毯子、一罐餅乾、幾瓶牛奶。

爸爸只能照辦，可是口中碎碎念：「她到底要把我們搞去哪裡？205 Chestnut St. 在城的另外一頭呢！我們為何不能就單純過個聖誕夜？」

他們一來到 205 Chestnut St.，就發現這個地址是整條街最暗的地方，只有客廳點著一盞小燈。他們一踏上門廊，門就開了，媽媽站在門口：「他們來了！噢，感謝上帝，你們總算到了。你們兩個小傢伙趕快將毯子拿去客廳，替沙發上的幾個小朋友蓋上，我來弄餅乾和牛奶。」

「能不能請妳告訴我這是怎麼一回事？」爸爸問。

媽媽回答：「這間屋子沒有暖氣，這位年輕的媽媽不知該怎麼辦。她的丈夫遺棄這個家，三個可憐的孩子正面臨一個很陰暗的聖誕節。所以別再抱怨了，我告訴她你會修理燃油的暖爐。」

說完媽媽就溜進廚房去熱牛奶了，兄妹為三個小孩分別蓋上一條毯子。年輕的媽媽這才解釋，說自己的丈夫跑了，帶走了床、衣物、大部分的傢俱。她本來覺得還熬得過去，一直到今夜暖爐故障，才不得不求助。

她進一步解釋：「我在『一元商店』洗衣、熨衣、清潔垃圾，每天都看見你們貼在「耶穌降生情景」盒子上的電話號碼。當暖爐故障時，那個號碼一直浮現我的腦海。紙條說如果有人缺少耶穌，請打該電話。我就想，或許貼紙條的人能幫我，所以今晚我路過商店，打電話給你太太。這間屋子缺少暖氣，我又沒錢可修暖爐。」

「沒問題！」爸爸說。「妳找對人了，修這個暖爐應該不難，讓我檢查一下，看妳還缺甚麼。」

不久媽媽進來客廳，帶了一盤餅乾和熱牛奶。在這段期間，爸爸已經修好暖爐了，但是說：「妳還缺燃油，讓我今晚打幾通電話，解決燃油的問題。」

一切都照計畫順利進行。當爸媽兄妹準備告辭的時候，他們發現多出來的耶穌，安詳地躺在客廳桌子的正中央。這是整間屋子唯一的聖誕裝飾，但是已經足夠讓屋子變成一個馬槽了！

各位弟兄姊妹：沒有人真的打電話找「耶穌降生情景」缺少的嬰兒耶穌，但是那個聖誕夜，卻真的有人缺少耶穌。感謝上帝，那個聖誕夜，「道」又再一次成了肉身，住在人中間！

聽到這裡，想必你我也已經和故事中的爸媽兄妹一樣，知道根本沒有包裝錯誤這一回事；因為「多一個耶穌」的傳統，從《路加福音》記載第一個聖誕夜「客館無所在通容允囧」，就已經開始了。

多一個耶穌，本就是「耶穌降生情景」的正確包裝！

今夜，聖誕夜，拜託大家做一件事：檢查一下教會或家裡的「耶穌降生情景」，是否有多一個耶穌。我若沒猜錯，應該都有！別懷疑，這不是包裝錯誤；這是要你我為多出來的耶穌，找一個適當的馬槽！

為多出來的耶穌找馬槽吧！讓今夜真的符合天使所頌讚的：

「佇極高的位榮光歸佇上帝！地上和平佇伊所歡喜的人的中間！」

An Extra Baby Jesus!

Luke 2:1-20

You have just heard a Christmas story told by the liturgist. I use the expression “a Christmas story” instead of “the Christmas story” because there is no such thing as “the Christmas story.” In fact, the New Testament attests to two versions of the Christmas story – one in Matthew and one in Luke. This suggests that we are allowed to tell the Christmas story in our own way. It is in the same spirit that I will tell you another Christmas story this evening.

About a week before Christmas, a mother bought a Nativity set from a local dollar store. When she unpacked it, she found two figures of the Baby Jesus. “Someone must have packed this wrong,” she said, and then realized that if she had two of the baby Jesus, one of the sets down at the store was missing a Baby Jesus. This mother decided to return to the store. But then Dad explained that there were probably thousands of that particular Nativity set scattered all over the country. It was probably miss-packed at the plant somewhere in Asia doing the packing, which meant the Baby Jesus could be missing from a set in Florida or Texas or California.

But Mom insisted. She took the two kids and returned to the store where she told the manager that they had an extra Jesus. The manager tried to tell her the same thing Dad had said but again Mom insisted and finally the manager agreed to post a sign with the remaining sets which read: “If you’re missing Baby Jesus, call this number.”

All week long Mom kind of hovered around the phone. Every time it rang she got excited because she wanted to give that Baby Jesus to its rightful owner. Every time the phone rang, Mom would say, “I’ll bet that’s about Jesus.” But it never was. Dad suggested that they just put the extra Jesus back in the box and forget about it.

“Put Baby Jesus back in the box?! What a horrible thing to do,” Mom said. “Surely someone will call. We’ll just keep the two Babies together in the manger until someone does.”

When no call had come by 5:00 p.m. on Christmas Eve, Mom insisted that Dad “just run down to the store” to see if there were any of the Nativity sets left. “You can see them right through the window,” she said. “If they are all gone, I am sure someone is bound to call tonight.”

Dad was not pleased. “Run down to the store? Are you nuts? It’s 15 below zero out there!” The kids, brother and sister, both piped up and said, “Daddy, we’ll go with you!” So they all got bundled up and headed out the front door.

When they got close to the store, brother ran ahead and pressed his nose up to the store window. “They’re all gone, Daddy,” he shouted. “Every set must have been sold. Hooray! The mystery will be solved tonight!” Dad who was still about a half a block away, heard the news and immediately turned on his heel and headed back home.

When they got back to the house, they noticed Mom was gone and so was the extra Baby Jesus.

“Someone must have called, and she went out to deliver the Baby,” Dad reasoned. “You kids get ready for bed while I wrap the Christmas presents.”

Then the phone rang. Dad yelled, “Answer the phone! It must be the store manager. Tell him we found the home for Jesus.”

But it was Mom. She called with instructions for the family to come to 205 Chestnut St. immediately, and bring three blankets, a box of cookies, and some milk.

Dad complied with the instruction but murmured, “Now what’s she gotten us into? 205 Chestnut. That’s half way across town. Why can’t we all just get on with Christmas?”

When they got to the house at 205 Chestnut St., they noticed it was the darkest one on the block. Only one tiny light burned in the living room. The minute they set foot on the porch, the door opened and Mom said, “They’re here! Oh thank God you got here! You kids take those blankets into the living room and wrap up the little ones on the couch. I’ll take the milk and cookies.”

“Would you mind telling me what is going on?” Dad asked.

Mom said, “There is no heat in this house, and this young mother doesn’t know what to do. Her husband walked out on her, and these poor kids are facing a very bleak Christmas, so don’t you complain. I told her you could fix the oil furnace.”

And then Mom strode off to the kitchen to warm up the milk. The kids wrapped each of the three little children in their own blanket. The children’s mother explained that her husband had run off, taking bedding, clothing, and almost every piece of furniture, and she’d been doing all right until the furnace broke down.

“I’ve been doing washing and ironing and cleaning at the dollar store,” she said. “I saw your number every day there, on those Nativity set boxes. When the furnace went out, that number kept going through my mind. It said on the box that if a person was missing Jesus, they should call that number. I figured that maybe you would help me. So I stopped at the store tonight, and I called your wife. I am missing heat. I have no money to fix that furnace.”

“Not a problem,” said Dad. “You’ve come to the right place. Shouldn’t be too hard to fix the furnace. I’ll look it over, see what it needs.”

Mom came into the living room carrying a plate of cookies and warm milk. Meanwhile, Dad got the oil burner working but said, “You need more oil. Let me make a few phone calls tonight and get you some oil.” Everything was done according to plan.

As Mom and Dad and two kids were ready to say goodbye, they noticed that extra Baby Jesus figurine was lying in the center of the table. It was the only sign of Christmas in the house. But that was enough to make the tiny house look like a manger.

Brothers and sisters, nobody ever did call about the missing Baby Jesus in the Nativity set. But you know it wasn't a packing mistake at all.

An extra Jesus – that's almost the only appropriate way to pack the Nativity set!

That night, the Word became flesh and dwelt among the people once again. That night, the Baby Jesus found his rightful manger in the family who needed him most.

Tonight, the Christmas Eve, you and I need to do one thing. We need to check the Nativity sets here in this church and in our homes, and see if there is an extra Jesus! I bet there is! And so we are compelled to find an appropriate Manger for this extra Jesus. Isn't that fun? The night is still young. We still have plenty of time to handle our own extra Jesus.

Before you set out to do that, let's pray that:

Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those who he favors!