

December 2020

My dear friends in Christ,

It's Advent again, Christmas is around the corner, closer than we think. It is time to remember the reason for the season. This story helps me to grasp the significance of the Christmas events. *“In a beautiful mansion, high on a pine-covered mountain, a father and his daughter have just finished a very serious conversation. Standing in the center of a bright, glass-enclosed room, they look like they have just finished carrying a heavy load up a steep flight of stairs.*

*The daughter—in her early teens—sighs deeply, then hugs her father. Her long hair shines in the bright light. Her face radiates warmth and joy. She wears a simple white dress with brightly colored embroidered roses. Around her neck hangs a string of perfect pearls.*

*The father wipes a tear from his cheek as he says good-bye and sends his daughter away. She turns, leaves the house, and enters a chauffeured limousine. The car starts and follows a long, twisting road down the valley below. After many miles the car enters a vacant, vandalized apartment house. The chauffeur opens the door for the girl, says a polite good-bye, and drives away.*

*The young girl looks intently at the building before her. Its windows are boarded up. The yard, the porch, and the sidewalk are all strewn with garbage and broken glass. She shudders, breathes deeply and climbs the creaking stairs. On the door she sees a notice: CAUTION – THIS BUILDING HAS BEEN CONDEMNED. She steps inside, closing the door behind her. She waits momentarily.... Her eyes adjust to the darkness.... And then she walks into the kitchen. There, among the broken dishes and other debris, a half dozen rats rummage in search of food. The girl shudders again, then sits down on the floor and waits.*

*Slowly, the bright beauty fades from her face – from her whole body. She bows her head. Her dress and the string of pearls lose their luster. Gradually her form grows smaller and smaller.... Then changes completely until.... Until, in the middle of the kitchen floor, another rat stirs as if awaking from a deep sleep.*

Is this the script for a horror movie? Not really.<sup>1</sup> It's a lesson about Christmas. Because Jesus did a similar thing. What that girl did is parallel to what Jesus did. Only what He did was real. What she did was fiction. She came from a lush mountain mansion, which was her father's house. Jesus came from heaven, His Father's house, into our sin filled world. And coming into our world must have seemed as distasteful as that girl going into that condemned building. Our world is much like a condemned building because of sin.

Jesus became like us, a man, but without sin. And to Him it must have seemed as repugnant as it seemed for that girl to become a rat. And it is probably not all that far off to think of ourselves like rats. That is what sin has done to us. But that did not deter

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<sup>1</sup> Story from “Called to Belong.” Eternal Word Series. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House) 49

Him. He still did it because He loves us. He did it to work our salvation. He did it to pay for our sin.

Christmas is significant because it is the beginning of the greatest act of love the world has ever known. Christmas is the celebration of the one and only time that God became man to save men. It seems an unlikely event, but a real and true one nonetheless. In theological circles this is called the Incarnation. This is the word that is used to describe God becoming man or God being hidden in the form of a man. Christmas is only topped in significance by a cross and an empty tomb.

It is time now, during the month of December, for us to prepare for our celebration of this most significant of events. Most of the Sunday morning themes will be ones of preparation and getting ready for this first coming of Jesus. Please come and take part and prepare spiritually. Please don't forget the reason for the season.

In His service,

Pastor Lohn