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Christmas Eve 2017 Litany: A Three-Voice Dramatic Reading

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Christmas Eve 2017 Litany:
A Three-Voice Dramatic Reading

Rick Pryce

This was the sermon at the Lunenburg Lutheran Parish Christmas Eve service in 2017.

1 – Mary
2 – Joseph
3 – Shepherds
1 – Three witnesses
2 – Three perspectives
3 – Three voices
1 – Calling us tonight
2 – Calling us to the story
3 – Calling us to hear
1 – To pause
2 – To listen
3 – To reflect
All – To respond

[Pause]

1 – Mary
2 – The mother of Jesus
3 – The mother of our Lord
1 – The un-wed mother of God
2 – A girl, really
3 – Probably no more than sixteen, and possibly younger
1 – A girl who said “Yes”
2 – “Yes” to God
3 – “Yes” to scandal
1 – “Yes” to risk
2 – “Yes” to the possibility of being ostracized by her family
3 – “Yes” to the possibility of being abandoned by her fiancé
1 – “Yes” to the possibility of being killed for being unfaithful
2 – A girl who said “Yes”
3 – “Yes” to God
1 – Mary
2 – The mother of Jesus
3 – The mother of our Lord
1 – Was no shrinking violet

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1 Rick Pryce is Pastor of Lunenburg Lutheran Parish in Lunenburg, NS, and a former member of Interfaith Grand River.
2 – Placid, submissive, quietly taking what was dealt
3 – Softly sitting in the dark, singing soothing lullabies
All – Not her!
1 – Mary, the mother of Jesus
2 – Was, in fact, a burning flame
3 – Was, in fact, a prophet of justice
1 – Was, in fact, a voice crying out in the wilderness
2 – Upsetting the apple cart
3 – Overturning the status quo
1 – Heralding the new creation
2 – Where justice and peace are the norm
3 – And foreigners are welcome
1 – Where the hungry are fed
2 – And the rich are turned away
3 – Where the poor are embraced
1 – And the mighty are stripped of their strength
2 – Where the anonymous masses are named by God
3 – And the arrogant are reduced to nothing

[Pause]

1 – Joseph
2 – The father of Jesus
3 – The father of our Lord
1 – Stoic
2 – Quiet
3 – Worker
1 – Provider
2 – Protector
3 – Dreamer
1 – Always in the background
2 – Always the silent partner
3 – Always in the shadows, behind the mother and child
All – However!
1 – He is just as crucial to the story
2 – He is just as important
3 – And he is just as dangerous
All – Yes, dangerous!
1 – Because he, too, said “Yes”
2 – “Yes” to God
3 – “Yes” to scandal
1 – “Yes” to risk
2 – “Yes” to accepting a wife who would be regarded as tainted
3 – “Yes” to public mistrust of his own standing and behaviour
1 – “Yes” to having to confront his own jealousies and fears
2 – Joseph, the honourable man
3 – Joseph, the radical lover
1 – Joseph, the overthrower of the expected
2 – Who refused to let suspicion set his agenda
3 – Who refuse to let fear dictate his response
1 – Also burned with divine flame
2 – Was also consumed with a vision of justice
3 – In which all are welcome
1 – All are welcome
2 – No matter how disruptive they might be
3 – Joseph welcomed the Christ-child into his own family
1 – And let go of the need for revenge
2 – And let go of the desire for retribution
3 – And let go of being in control of his life
1 – And lovingly
2 – Faithfully
3 – Dangerously
1 – Embraced his dangerous wife
2 – Embraced her dangerous son
3 – Embraced the dangerous new creation
All – Coming to birth in front of him

[Pause]

1 – Shepherds
2 – The first witnesses
3 – First recipients of the Good News
1 – Glad singers of tidings
2 – Joyful tellers to all who would listen
3 – Praising and thanking God for what they had seen and heard
1 – Shepherds
2 – Biblical symbol of those who care
3 – Protectors of the vulnerable
1 – Leading their flocks
2 – Feeding their sheep
3 – Finding green pastures in which their charges can find rest
1 – But these shepherds are dangerous
2 – These shepherds upset the status quo
3 – These shepherds overthrow what passes for normal
1 – Not by what they did
2 – Not by saying “Yes”
3 – Not by their singing and telling and praising
1 – These shepherds are dangerous because of what happened TO them
2 – Because of what they were told
3 – Because it was shepherds who were told it
All – Because of Who. They. Were.
1 - We need to remember the truth about shepherds
2 - In spite of all the good PR
3 - And biblical imagery
1 - They were assumed to be lazy
2 - Which might have been true
3 - They were portrayed as dirty
1 - Which was probably true
2 - They were regarded as smelly
3 - Which was certainly true!
1 - They were, in fact, viewed as outsiders
2 - As less than important
3 - As undesirable
1 - And these shepherds were also unreliable
2 - Remember what happened when they had their vision?
3 - Remember how they responded?
1 - They ran!
2 - They left their flock!
3 - They abandoned their duty!
All - They had one job!
1 - “Stay with the sheep!”
2 - “Care for the sheep!”
3 - “Don’t leave the sheep!”
1 - And they left
2 - They ran off
3 - Leaving their livelihood
1 - Or possibly, even worse, leaving someone else’s livelihood
2 - In order to see a baby
3 - The child of an un-wed mother
1 - The child of a radical father
2 - Who had been born a nobody
3 - Just like them
All - Just. Like. Them.
1 - Just
2 - Like
3 - Us

[Short pause]

1 - The angels came to shepherds
2 - Lazy
3 - Dirty
1 - Smelly
2 - Unreliable
3 - Shepherds
1 – Saying, “To you is born a Saviour.”
2 – To you
3 – To you
1 – A dangerous
2 – Scandalous
3 – Risky
1 – Saviour
2 – Through whom God says “Yes”
3 – To shepherds
1 – And outsiders
2 – And strangers
3 – And everyone who is considered “Other”

[Pause]

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2 – Joseph
3 – Shepherds
1 – Three witnesses
2 – Three perspectives
3 – Three voices
1 – Calling us tonight
2 – Calling us to the story
3 – Calling us to hear
1 – To pause
2 – To listen
3 – To reflect
All – To respond
1 – Respond to the flame of justice burning within
2 – Respond to the new creation being born in front of us
3 – Respond with joy to the Good News being sung to us
1 – The lowly are regarded with favour
2 – The fearful are shown mercy
3 – The weak are lifted up
1 – The hungry are fed
2 – The outsiders are welcomed
3 – And the dangerous
1 – Scandalous
2 – Risky
3 – Promise of love
1 – Is fulfilled

[Short pause]
2 – In you

[Short pause]

3 – This night.

[Short pause]

All – Amen.