

December 24, 2013 – Christmas Eve – Children’s Mass – Year A
Don’t Miss the Rest of the Story!

[invite the small children to sit on cloths on floor in front of the altar]

Merry Christmas!

One of the things I like to do is read stories to my grandchildren.

What are your favorites stories?

[children respond]

Have you ever read a book about a circus?

Have you ever been to a circus or seen one on TV?

What do you see at a circus performance?

[children respond -- clown tricks, acrobats tumbling, elephants doing tricks, lions jumping through hoops, ...]

I have a circus story that you may not have heard.

May I read it to all of you – even if you are not my grandchildren?

That reminds me of a story I heard about a little boy who had always wanted to go to a circus. One day he was walking down the street when he saw a poster in a store window. The poster said that a circus was coming to town and that a ticket to the circus cost one dollar. The boy ran home and asked his father if he would give him a dollar to go to the circus on Saturday.

His father told him that if he would work hard and get all of his chores done, he would give him a dollar to go to the circus. Saturday morning came and the boy got up early and did all of his chores.

"I have all of my chores done," the boy told his dad.

The boy's father gave him a dollar and the boy headed into town filled with excitement about seeing wild animals, trapeze artists, and all of the things that come with a circus. Since he arrived in town so early, he was on the front row when the circus parade started down the main street of town. The boy was thrilled when the animals and other circus acts paraded by.

At the end of the parade came the clowns and following the clowns was the ringmaster. When the ringmaster passed by where he was standing, the boy ran out into the street, took his folded dollar bill from his pocket, and handed it to the ringmaster.

"Thanks," mister, said the boy, "that was a great circus." Then he turned around and walked home. He never knew what he had missed. He thought he had been to the circus, but he had only been to the parade.

I wonder, why did the boy leave after the parade.

[Did the boy see the Circus? Why not? What did he miss?]

[children respond]

The boy saw the clowns, animals and acrobats but he didn't see them doing anything special.

What a shame.

He saw the beginning part but missed so much more!

I feel a bit like that at Christmas.

Christmas is about a very special baby, baby Jesus.

But if all we pay attention to is the baby, we miss so much more to the Christmas story!

We can like a baby – they are so cute.

But we can also get to be a friend to that baby as the baby grows.

We can talk with that toddler.

We can share secrets with that other child.

We can even grow up to be best of friends.

And this baby Jesus is a great person to have as a friend.

As we hear more of the story about Jesus we will find that he is not only a friend but the best friend we can ever have.

He listens to us and he has great stories to tell us.

What are some of the stories Jesus tells us?

[children respond]

Jesus gives us great examples of how to treat other people. Example (Good Samaritan? Good Shepherd? ...)

I hope that I see you here at church often to hear more stories about Jesus.

For instance, 12 days from now, on the 12th day of Christmas, we will hear the story of the three Wise Men coming to visit baby Jesus.

And, we will find out why they travelled so far to see this baby.

To help us all remember today's story that you acted out about baby Jesus we have a little present for you, an ornament of a little shepherd boy who came to see Jesus in the stable.

Hang it in your house to remind you that there is still more to come.

OK, you can go back to your seats with your family.

Now I would like say a few words to the families.

I am 71 years old and each of the Gospel stories about Jesus, day after day, week after week, still have an impact on me.

There are the “ah ha’s”, new insights, new connections.

Like today’s story about the coming of Jesus.

It reminds me of a little prayer we say when we pour the water into the wine at the altar.

***“By the mystery of this water and wine,
May we come to share in the divinity of Christ,
Who humbled himself to share in our humanity.”***

Wow, what a God!

Such great love for us.

Coming to a stable, lying in a manger, a feed trough, just for us!

And that love and humility did not stop 2000 years ago.

Jesus invites us to keep growing in our *relationship* with him.

Like the children, we are invited

- to be Jesus’ friend,
- to talk with him often,
- to read the stories about him,
- and to listen to all the wisdom he has to offer us.

Jesus is a life changer!

Christmas is just the beginning – don’t miss out on the rest of the story about Jesus, our Messiah.