

Advent 1999: Mangers and Manure

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Seekers Church

A Christian Community

In the Tradition of the Church of the Saviour

Advent 1999

Mangers and Manure

SILENT REFLECTION

That the treasure of God's grace reaches us surrounded by garbage will not seem surprising to anyone who is personally familiar with life in the church....Grace comes to us, so Martin Luther argues, hidden *sub contrario*, beneath its opposite. From this perspective, any idealized view of the church as only treasure is as faulty a vision of reality as any cynical view that the church is only garbage. Mangers, by definition, are found where there is manure.

Morse, *Not Every Spirit*, 288.

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Come all you who struggle and are heavy-laden.
Come to the stable,
where beasts of burden find food and rest.

Community: The journey is not over;
our labor is not done,
but we need a safe place for rest and renewal,
and the warm darkness of the stable
promises shelter for the night.

INVOCATION

HYMN

WORD FOR THE CHILDREN

SILENCE

LITANY

Leader: Our hearts exult in you, O God,
our spirits rejoice in your saving grace.

Voice 1: Holy your many names!
Your mercy embraces the faithful,
one generation to the next.

Voice 2: Your mighty arm
scatters the proud in their conceit,
pulls tyrants from their thrones,
and raises the humble.

Voice 1: With love, you fill the starving,
and rescue the lowly,
recalling always your promise of mercy.

Voice 2: Your enemies will be shattered,
you thunder against them in the heavens,
you judge the ends of the earth.

Community: All of creation is full of your glory!

Come with peace to save your people.

SILENCE

PRAYERS

COMMON CONFESSION

Leader: As we bring our confession to God,
let us remember the stable.

Community: We confess that we long to stay
blanketed and warm in the inn.

It is so easy to be grateful here
where a fire burns and supper waits.

We confess that we do not want
to tend to those who wait outside,
much less invite them to our hearth and hearts.

A Voice: Indonesia and Yugoslavia?

Mexico and China?

Appalachia and Anacostia?

Community: Should we know these names, these places?

These faces are not ours to worry about.

She is not my sister. He is not my father.

INDIVIDUAL PRAYERS OF CONFESSION

ASSURANCE

Leader: Advent brings us the whiff of the stable,
the smell of waste and hay.

The arrival of one vulnerable baby born to rags
and laid in a manger.

This is God's good news,

Ours to carry from this warm place

to those in the cold outside.

PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY

HYMN

THE WORD

FIRST LESSON

SILENCE

GOSPEL LESSON

SERMON

SILENT REFLECTION

OFFERING

SHARED REFLECTIONS

ANNOUNCEMENTS

HYMN

BENEDICTION

Leader: Be vigilant in this dark night.

Share the struggle, fear and pain,

looking always for God's signs of hope.

Grace comes to us hidden beneath its opposite.

Amen.