

## Sermon 20 December 2009 Family Christmas Service

Subject: Luke 2,8-20

Dear parishioners, dear friends of the Swiss Church

- I invite you to ponder on what picture of the Holy family we have.
- Don't we all have this ideal picture of the Holy family with Maria, Joseph and little Jesus in the manger?

Have a look at nativity Figures: Sweet faces, it looks clean and neat. Really beautiful.

It is definitely a peaceful image that I have in mind when I hear the story of Jesus' birth as we heard it today.

But was it that peaceful?

We don't know but it seems that it was not at all an easy situation:

- They stayed in a stable for the birth of Jesus – imagine: Everything else than easy.
- Maria was pregnant and Joseph didn't really know how this came all about – everything else but easy.
- And then the Bible tells us that they had to flee with their newborn because all the boys who were under 2 years old and under were about to be murdered.
- Thinking about all of this I thought this would actually make an excellent Soap Opera on TV today.): A lot of action and drama.

So the story about Jesus birth is anything else but an always happy and easy family story. It is quite a complex and in some ways a difficult situation Jesus was born into.

You might be aware of that anyway –

But it be that subconsciously we still try to rebuild this perfect family image as we might see it on TV. Especially around this time of the year many of us have this very high expectations.

And yet the whole message about Christmas is that there was hope.

Jesus birth was a sign of hope, because he was meant to be the Messiah, the long expected Christ. He was meant to be the one to give people a different view on what life is really all about.

This little baby born in a stable...

He challenged society and those who were part of the establishment and provoked people to question their views on

what is right and what is wrong. And by doing so he was a sign of hope for many, especially for those who were on the brink of society.

Can Jesus today still be a sign of hope for us? Or what else is a sign of hope for us? There are many reasons to be worried today:

Politics

Environmental challenges

Poverty

Illnesses etc.

Problems in our own families

How is it possible to keep our hopes and dreams alive for this world facing all of those difficulties?

We will later in this service hear poems that were written by children, who spend many days of their lives in a hospital. I can already tell you that these poems are full of hope. Somehow these children seem to have hope even though their situation is everything else but easy.

(It would be tempting to think that there must be hidden secret of how they keep their hope alive.)

And we all know and they also mention it in the poems that there are days that are difficult for them and their hope is only little.

There are days when they have treatment as they described it or when they are just fed up with being ill and being able to live a life like all the other children.

But somehow when they write about their situation then they mainly mention the positive side of what they experience.

(And I know that later after the service there will be the chance to buy a book with a collection of those poems written by children in hospital.)

And some of those poems might touch our hearts especially because of that sign of hope that speaks through them.

For me the story of Jesus that started so poorly in a manger under difficult circumstances is a very special story of hope. This life has been transformed into something that changed thousands of people's lives and even the course of history.

And it's the one that we remember now during Christmas.

Hopefully this story is still able to inspire us and to give us new hope where there seems to be only little room for our dreams and wishes. Amen