Tell Me a Story of Christmas
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Since we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of our church building this Sunday, and are taking some time during worship to share memories of that, there really isn't time today for a full sermon. Instead I'm sharing a writing by Bill Vaughn, entitled "Tell Me a Story of Christmas," followed by The Christmas story. I don't normally use the King James Version of the Bible, because I feel other translations are easier for us to read and to understand. But there are some portions of scripture that are so ingrained in our memories that they just don't sound quite right unless we hear them as we remember them from long ago. The 23rd Psalm is one, and the second chapter of Luke is another. So, instead of using the New Revised Standard Version as we usually do, we'll hear the Christmas Story this morning from the King James Version.

Tell Me a Story of Christmas
By Bill Vaughn

“Tell me a story of Christmas,” she said. The television mumbled faith inanities in the next room. From a few houses down the block come the sound of car doors slamming and guests being greeted with large cordiality. Her father thought awhile. His mind went back over the interminable parade of Christmas books he had read at the bedside of his children.

“Well,” he started tentatively, “once upon a time, it was the week before Christmas, all little elves at the North Pole were sad…”

“I’m tired of elves,” she whispered. And he could tell she was tired, maybe almost as weary as he was himself after the last few feverish days.

“Okay,” he said. There was once, in a city not very far from here, the cutest wriggly little puppy you ever saw. The snow was falling, and this little puppy didn’t have a home. As he walked along the streets, he saw a house that looked quite a bit like our house. And at the window—”

“Was a little girl who looked quite a bit like me,” she said with a sigh. “I’m tired of puppies. I love Pinky, of course. I mean story puppies.”

“Okay,” he said. “No puppies. This narrows the field.”

“What?”

“Nothing. I’ll think of something. Oh, sure. There was a forest, way up in the north, farther even than where Uncle Ed lives. And all the trees were talking about how each one was going to be the grandest Christmas tree of all. One said, ‘I’m going to be a Christmas tree too.’ And all the trees laughed and laughed and said: ‘A Christmas tree? You? Who would want you?’”
“No trees, Daddy,” she said. “We have a tree at school and at Sunday school and at the supermarket and downstairs and a little one in my room. I am very tired of trees."

“You are very spoiled,” he said.


“Let’s see. All the reindeer up at the North Pole were looking forward to pulling Santa’s sleigh. All but one, and he felt sad because —” He began with a jolly ring in his voice but quickly realized that this wasn’t going to work either. His daughter didn’t say anything; she just looked at him reproachfully.

“Tired of reindeer too?” he asked. “Frankly, so am I. How about Christmas on the farm when I was a little boy? Would you like to hear about how it was in the olden days, when my grandfather would heat up bricks and put them in the sleigh and we’d all go for a ride?”

“Yes, Daddy,” she said obediently. “But not right now. Not tonight.”

He was silent, thinking. His repertoire, he was afraid, was exhausted. She was quiet too. Maybe, he thought, I’m home free. Maybe she has gone to sleep.


Then it was as though he could read the words, so firmly were they in his memory. Still holding her hand, he leaned back:

“And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed…."

Her hand tightened a bit in his, and he told her a story of Christmas.

Luke 2:1-20

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed.
(And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)

And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judæa, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)

To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them,
and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.