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 Pageant

Christmas Comfort
Luke 1:30-38

³⁰ The angel said to her, “**Do not be afraid, Mary**, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him **Jesus**. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³ He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” ³⁴ Mary said to the angel, “**How can this be**, since I am a virgin?”^[c] ³⁵ The angel said to her, “**The Holy Spirit** will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born^[d] will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶ And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷ **For nothing will be impossible with God.**” ³⁸ Then Mary said, “**Here am I**, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

For me, it’s **not Thanksgiving** without turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes and gravy.
 And it’s **not Christmas** without Messiah music, a nativity set, candlelight Christmas eve, and of course—a Christmas **pageant**.

What makes it **feel like Christmas** to you?
 What are your favorite **traditions**?
 What about your favorite Christmas **foods**?

I think we all want to have the **comforts** of the holidays.
 And there’s something especially comforting about Christmas **pageants**—seeing young people act out the story of Jesus’ birth.

The **prophet Isaiah** knew how much we need God’s comfort.
 All throughout his book, we hear words of peace and comfort.
 God knows we need comfort as we wait for our Savior.

Isaiah 40:1 has words made famous by Handel’s Messiah:

*Comfort, O comfort my people,
says your God.*

How do *YOU need God's comfort* this Christmas?

All through Advent we've been waiting on Dec 25th.
But we are also waiting for Jesus *to come back*.
We're waiting for the day when things are not such a mess.

Because if we're honest, *Christmas isn't easy*.
Gifts to buy, toys to assemble, food to prepare, homes to decorate....
There's so much pressure to make it picture perfect.
Christmas can be *beautiful and wonderful*...
and at the same time, it can be the *hardest* time of year.

Christmas is a *reminder* of all the family members who won't be around the table,
The gatherings that won't be perfect.

At Christmas we are also keenly aware of everything that's *wrong* in the *world*
all around us, the never-ending wars, suffering people, the victims of storms and
violence, the needy families right in our own community.

At Christmas, we are reminded of our *own struggles*,
the kids who are rebelling, the marriages crumbling,
the parents who are aging, and all who are suffering, in body, mind, or spirit.

It's a time of year when spending time *alone* can become unbearable,
And spending time with *others* can send you over the edge....

Throw in the crazy December calendar, with too many commitments,
And not enough time, and well....

I could use some *COMFORT* at Christmas, what about you?

Well, thankfully we find that right here, tonight.
In the story that is over 2000 years old...

The birth of Jesus.

Somewhere right in the middle of all our brokenness,
We bring ourselves back to that night long ago,
When a tiny baby was born who would change our lives forever....

And we remember that *life was just as broken*,
 and chaotic at Jesus' birth.
 Laid in a feeding trough, surrounded by smelly animals, no room at the inn,
 Slightly shady shepherds sharing the good news...
 Unknown wise men with gifts from the far East...
 Mary certainly had a lot to ponder in her heart.

But, in the *middle of that brokenness* chaos, beauty and wonder,
 a Savior is born into the world,
 Into a hurting and fallen world—
 To bring good news, and new life.
 To bring comfort, and so much more.

You know what words always hit me from the gospel tonight?
 It's the words of the angel Gabriel to Mary:

*Greetings, favored one,
 do not be afraid...
 for nothing will be impossible with God.*

These are words of *comfort and hope*.

What we've seen with the children, and heard from the gospel today,
 Is THE *timeless message* of comfort and hope.
 There's a very good reason we watch children re-enact this story....
 It's so we can see and hear and feel it all over again.
 So we can receive the *comfort* of knowing the good news of the gospel—
 for each and every one of us! Jesus came for US!

We *need comfort* in this broken and fallen world.
 You can't find a single person without *problems* in this room today.
 We *all* need comfort from God.
 And we all need the *Christmas message of hope*.

That *hope* is more powerful than any cards, gifts, dinners, or gatherings this
 Christmas.
 It is something that can *sustain* us,
 and *carry* us through even the darkest times.

And you know- when we *receive* God's comfort,
then we are able to *share it*.

Once it sinks into our hearts, we want to share that good news.

We want Christmas to be about more than just us.

We want others to know God's comfort, and hope.

Close your eyes for just a moment.

And ask God to bring you that comfort and hope.

Now *open your eyes, and your heart*.

And know that God has heard all of our prayers.

We are here because Christ is born for US, tonight.

That is our *Good News*,

That is our *comfort*,

And for that Good News, we can all say, Merry Christmas! Amen!