

**The Right Time, the Right Place**  
**The Reverend Debbie Cook, Grace Church in Haddonfield**  
**Christmas, Proper I (BCP); Luke 2:1-14 (15-20)**  
**December 24, 2007**

The year was 1980; I was a nineteen year old transfer student looking for off-campus housing. Transfer students didn't get on-campus housing at that time—there was a shortage of rooms. So, we were invited to a series of 'housing seminars'—meetings where we were informed about off-campus housing possibilities, how to read and sign a lease, renter's insurance, and other helpful details. Most of all, however, these meetings served as a way to meet potential roommates.

I sat in the large student-center room, one of many students in a large circle. We listened to the speakers politely and studied our apartment sheets and maps, all the while silently sizing one another up as a potential roommate. Finally, the time came for us to talk: 'speak to the person next to you', we were told. And so I turned to a girl next to me, and we talked; she seemed nice enough. And then we were told to turn and talk to our other neighbor.

We both turned at the same time and said 'hi!'. We laughed at that moment, and it seemed in absolutely no time at all, we had clicked. We had a lot in common—both business majors, both wearing summer dresses, both had worked office jobs, even our initials were the same. We decided that we would be roommates.

We met up with a girl and her potential roommate, and we seemed to hit it off. With the help of my new friend's mom, we all went apartment hunting, and found a lovely place that same day. It was truly a day of being in the right place at the right time—in a way that I could only begin to know. You see, that new roommate of mine eventually introduced me her friend, Jim—whom I married in 1984. The rest, as they say, is history. And this past Saturday, as two of my three college roommates gathered here for my ordination some 27 years later, I once again could look back to that fateful day in June 1980 as God putting me in the right place at the right time.

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The shepherds of tonight's well-known gospel story could say the same thing: they were in the right place at the right time. They were out in the fields on that miraculous night; they were near the place of Jesus' birth. They obviously were familiar with the potential stables in the area—or else how else would they have found one baby in a manger in one very crowded town? After all, the angels' directions seemed rather vague (I'd like to see you plug that into your GPS). However, they were right people in the right place at the right time—and they found the Savior, the Messiah, the Lord.

And just as my life was changed by one right time, right place moment, so the shepherds lives were changed also. Oh, they went back to tending their sheep, but almost unknowingly, they became an integral part of the greater story. Their witness to Mary and Joseph affected them, and all whom they told. Their hearts were lifted, for they had met the source of all hope, all love, all life. God still cared for God's people, God had fulfilled God's promise: the Messiah had come! Nothing seemed the same from that moment on—and for the world, it never was or will be.

Jesus' arrival into the struggling, oft-broken world as a fragile, dependent human infant transformed us forever. In the moment that the Creator joined with and became the created, all of creation was changed. It too became holy, infused with presence of God. Our regular lives, our work, our play, our sufferings, and struggles and pain—all are part of the life of God. Through Jesus, our lives are intimately linked with the One who loved us into being, and who gave himself for us so that we might live forever with Him. Our very lives, as baptized members of the Body of Christ, are called to be a witness to that each and every day.

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And though Mary and Joseph may have questioned it (I would have!), Jesus was born at the right place at the right time. For God, every place is the right one, every moment the right time. The God of justice and compassion embraces all--a stable instead of a palace, a manger in lieu of a bed, a night with shepherds in place of close family—all the right time, right place for Jesus, the one who came to free the captives of sin, heal the sick, reconcile the outcasts, welcome the strangers—and to preach the Good News to the poor.

We too, are called to spread the Good News of God's love. Jesus is born! God is here with us! And just as one pivotal moment can change a life forever, so can the sharing of the Good news of God in Christ. One person's life-story touches another, and like a chain reaction, lives can be transformed. Just like the shepherds were to those around them, each of us is called to be the right person in the right place at the right time for another.

And so, this Christmas, as we remember that night so long ago, filled with angels and shepherds and a special baby in an ordinary manger, remember too that we too have been sent, as the shepherds were. Come at this time and this place and look upon the Lord of all, and be amazed; and then Go! and tell it out to all the world.

Jesus is born! God is come!

Hallelujah!