Merry Christmas!

That probably was not the Gospel story you expected to hear this morning. I suspect you were expecting a story about a newborn wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. I suspect you were expecting a story about angels singing to shepherds as they watched their flocks at night.

Instead you got this account
that goes all the way back to the beginning . . . of it all.
It tells about a word, a Word so powerful that it becomes the source of all LIFE that exists.
And that Word that begets life is also the very source of all Light, and that the light overpowers all darkness.

The story goes on to say more about this WORD. The Hebrew for WORD is DABAR - What is spoken happens.

So this WORD takes on human flesh
We say, ". . .and the word became flesh and dwelt among us."

The implication is that the same life and light that are in Jesus, the Word are also in us.

I don't know about all of you, but I know many of us have a feeling that we are in very dark times right now, scary times, a forbidding times and facing a great deal of uncertainty.

Even though the official title for the feast is "The Nativity of the Lord", at a deeper level, at its heart, it is really a celebration of the Incarnation.

God defines God's self now in relationship to and with human beings.

God's very being is essentially related to human beings.

This feast is much more than a birthday celebration for Jesus.

Somehow it ties together the birth with the suffering, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus as well as his sending of the Holy Spirit upon us all

In the early Church the day of the death of Jesus was thought to be the same day as his conception (March 25). This then led to the establishment of the date of Christmas on this date.
The Incarnation is the celebration of God’s choice to dwell in and among us so we might bring life and light to the world.

Nathan Mitchell, emeritus professor of liturgy at Notre Dame, once wrote: "I would say that the Church’s liturgy at Christmas, as always — is a DARE; a dare to long for a tomorrow sweeter than today; a dare to let God disappear into the likes of you and me; a dare to visit where we never were and to know what never was."

Senator Robert Kennedy quoted George Bernard Shaw: "Some people see things as they are and say, ‘Why?’ I dream things that never were and say, ‘Why not?’

Incarnation is a dare to trust that we are meant to participate in what was said at the end of our first reading that "all the ends of the earth will behold the salvation of our God. We are not here to observe while God does that. We are here to participate in God’s doing it.

This Incarnation gets played out in all sorts of ways here day in and day out. Little kindnesses these sisters show to one another. I have a friend whose mom is now in a small nursing home in Taylor. It is run by a woman from Romania. There are four patients. The owner absolutely extends herself for these four.

Important to keep in mind that the Incarnation is a sheer gift.

St. Augustine says: "Ask if this [the Incarnation] were merited; ask for its reason, for its justification, and see whether you will find any other answer but sheer grace."

Once again, Merry Christmas!