

# What We Hold<sup>1</sup>

DECEMBER 25TH, 2019 by Lonnie Lacy  
for St. Anne's Episcopal Church – Tifton, Georgia  
[Isaiah 9:2-7](#) [Luke 2:1-14](#)

Preached by Judi Geistlinger at First Presbyterian, Champaign 1/1/23

This may sound odd,  
but one of the most important things  
anyone ever said to me  
when I was still training  
to be a pastor was this:

“Honey, whatever that is you’re doin’,  
you gotta put it down  
and come hold this baby.”

“What?”

“Put it down,  
and come *hold this baby.*”

I was a brand new chaplain-intern  
at Children’s National Medical Center  
in Washington, D.C.

I was all of 24 years old,  
just two years out of college.  
I had just arrived and been told  
that the floor I would be covering  
was the neonatal intensive care unit.  
I knew *nothing.*

So there I was on my first day.  
My starchy white shirt.  
My coat and tie.  
My shiny new plastic badge.  
A clipboard in my hands  
and a clueless expression on my face.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://lonnielacy.com/what-we-hold/?fbclid=IwAR1rg9QmuFxuThxP2VQd3EU4pQoppYQJZNMARXF19Y65EGIFvcJPD7GCdRk>  
DECEMBER 25TH, 2019 by Lonnie Lacy, Preached at St. Anne’s Episcopal Church – Tifton, Georgia, [Isaiah 9:2-7](#) [Luke 2:1-14](#)

I had no idea what I was doing  
as I stood watching those nurses  
tending those babies  
who were fighting for their very lives.

So, I did what any of us would do:  
I tried my best  
to look very busy  
and very important.

By the way,  
if you ever want to look  
very busy and very important  
just carry a clipboard  
and flip the pages up and down  
while you glance up and side to side.

As a wise man once said,  
“60% of the time it works every time.”  
But not on *this* nurse.

“Honey,” she said,  
“whatever that is you’re doin’,  
you gotta put it down  
and come hold this baby.”

“What?”  
    *“Put it down,  
    and come  
    hold this baby.”*

Let the record show,  
this nurse was no  
Virgin Mary meek and mild.  
Before I knew it,  
she had physically  
yanked the clipboard  
from my hands,

spun me around by my shoulders,  
popped me down into a rocking chair,  
and placed *somebody else's* baby  
right into my arms.

"There," she said.

"If you're gonna be  
that baby's chaplain,  
*that's* what he needs you to do."

"Uh okay," I said,

"But *what else* am I supposed to do?"

"Nothing!" she said.

"There's nothing else you *can* do.

You just *hold* him.

And *love* him,

And *pray*."

Turns out,  
she was right.

A huge part of how  
I learned to be a pastor  
was by holding babies  
in a hospital wing  
for an entire summer.

The thing is,  
when you're holding a baby,  
there really *isn't* much else  
you can do.

Aw sure,  
we've come up with  
all kinds of ingenious ways  
to try to get around that:  
baby wraps,  
baby slings,  
Baby Björns.

In fact, when I later became a dad  
I considered myself  
the reigning champion  
of holding the baby  
while also unloading the dishwasher.

(But just because you can  
doesn't mean you should.)

It's just true.

When you're holding a baby,  
there's not much else you can do . . .  
except just  
*hold* it,  
and *love* it,  
and *pray*.

And honestly,  
the baby can't do  
all that much either.  
The two of you  
just sort of . . .  
melt into one another.  
You just sort of . . . exist . . . *together*.

So, maybe—just maybe—  
that's why *you're* here today.  
I don't know your business.  
I don't know why  
*you* think you're here.  
I don't know what *you* think  
drew you out,  
got you dressed,  
brought you to this place.  
~~*under the cover of darkness*~~  
~~*in the muggy midnight air*~~  
~~*while all the "normal" people*~~  
~~*are already home*~~  
~~*fast asleep.*~~

I don't know  
what *you* think it was,  
but here's what I can tell you:  
I don't think it was a Facebook ad;  
I don't think it was a personal invitation;  
I don't think it was tradition.  
Whether you know it or not,  
you have come here  
for one thing,  
and one thing only.  
You have come here  
*to hold the Baby.*  
Whether you know it or not,  
*he* is the One  
who has brought you here,  
and really,  
*there is nothing else*  
*you can do.*  
You just hold him.  
And love him,  
And pray.  
But be forewarned, my friends,  
for a time like this  
comes at great cost.  
To hold *this* Baby—  
this Jesus whom we proclaim this day—  
means you are going  
to have to put  
some things  
down.  
When you hold *this* Baby,  
*nothing else matters.*  
Everything else  
falls away.  
When you hold this Baby,  
the warriors  
must put down

their tramping boots  
and all their garments  
rolled in blood.

The oppressors  
must put down their rods.

The emperors  
must put down their censuses.

The shepherds  
must put down their staffs.

The judges  
must put down their gavels.

The bankers their pencils.

The farmers their plows.

The surgeons their scalpels.

The journalists their pens.

The scholars their books.

The janitors their brooms.

The interns their clipboards.

The internet trolls their keyboards.

The leaders their egos.

When you and I hold this Baby—  
when we hold this Jesus—  
everything else must fall away:  
our cell phones,  
our distractions,  
our ambitions,  
our rights,  
our wrongs,  
our hurts,

our grievances . . .

***our power.***

“Whatever that is you’re doin’,  
you gotta put it down  
and come hold this baby.”

But here’s the final twist.

Here’s the insane *grace* of it all.

For all that you and I have to lay aside—  
for all the power we have to let go  
in order to hold this Baby—  
the thing is (don’t you know?),  
*he* has already gone *first*.

Yeah, you have to give up a lot  
in order to *hold* a baby,  
but think of *how much more*  
you have to give up  
in order to *BE* a baby.

He could have come  
any way he wanted.

As a mighty warrior.  
As a fearsome beast.  
As a petty king  
with swagger,  
and prestige,  
and power.

But instead,  
this Baby—  
this Jesus—  
came like this.  
Whatever it was *he* was doing,  
*he* put it down  
all those years ago  
so *he* could come and rest

right there  
next to *your* beating heart.

So, my friends,  
what is it?  
What is it  
that *you* get to lay aside,  
even if just for this one day?  
The Creator of your soul  
has put down everything he had,  
because all he ever really wanted . . .  
*was just to be with you.*  
So whatever that is you're doing,  
put it down.  
Come on.  
*Hold the Baby.*  
There's nothing else  
you *can* do.  
You just *hold* him.  
And *love* him.  
And *pray*.  
Amen.