

CHRISTMAS EVE  
LUKE 2:1-20  
DECEMBER 24, 2017

Jesus is born in Bethlehem. He is born in a stable and placed in a manger. He is the first-born son of Mary and he is wrapped in bands of cloth. He is in a stable and in a manger because there is no room for him in the warmth of the inn. There is no bed for him to lay his head or his tiny body. Yet he is born and he is cared for and he is loved. At his birth the angels sang and the shepherds visited and they were amazed. His mother adored him as any mother does and his father, Joseph, stood there marveling as any proud father would. The long trip from Nazareth was over. The child born King of the Jews had arrived. Jesus was not born in the inn but there was much warmth in that stable and there was peace around that manger.

**Luke 2:10-14** But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and 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 heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

Good news! The angel of the Lord proclaims the good news. The news proclaimed was that a Savior has been born. The good news is that in the city of David a child is born. That child would be the salvation for all people. The good news for the shepherds is that they no longer need to be afraid because the Messiah has come. They can be filled with great joy because of this good news. The shepherds no longer needed to consider themselves outcasts among the religious people because God has blessed them. Their salvation came to them that very day. They would not need to wait until some other day to receive their salvation because the Messiah had been born. He would accomplish the fullness of salvation on the cross but the kingdom of God came to earth on that night.

This evening we experience the Light of the World who is Jesus. The Light has come and no darkness can overcome that light. We sing carols of the season. Our Christmas carols reflect what was taking place when Christ was born in Bethlehem.

It was a time for singing and a time for joy not only for those gathered in that stable but for the entire world. I don't know how silent that night was when Jesus was born. It may have been quiet that night in Bethlehem but there was certainly great joy in heaven and I believe the entire heavenly host sang out loud and strong. At least for one night there was peace on earth and good will among those that God favors.

We sing those same Christmas carols this evening with people around the world. Jesus is the Messiah. He is born today into our lives and into our hearts. His glory is made known to all that are gathered in churches around the world. On this night there is peace on earth and there is good will among those that God favors. You are here in this sanctuary. You are here because it is Christmas and you want to hear this familiar story but you are here also because you want to see the glory of the Lord shining in your life. You are here because you want to stop being afraid and you know that the Light of the world shining into your life will give you peace.

This weekend many have been doing last minute shopping and taking care of last minute details. Each is taking one more chance looking for the perfect gift for each person on the list. The lists might include gadgets, items of clothing and toys. We give gifts because we love our children and grandchildren. We love our parents and our nieces and nephews. Because we love them, we want to give them the gift that reflects that love. The gift most precious to me is just having my family around me. God has given me the gift of family. If you were to ask me about a stocking stuffer I would say I want my family in my stocking. I would also want you in my stocking. God has given you to me as a gift.

The truth is that the perfect gift is not found at Wal-Mart, Michaels, Barnes and Nobles or Kohl's. The perfect gift isn't even under the tree at home or in a stocking hanging beside a fireplace. When you arrived for our service today you were ready to unwrap the perfect gift. You did not come to see a human pastor although I am pleased you are here. You came to receive the perfect gift. That perfect gift is Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God that came to earth to save his people from their sins.

The gift from God to you is your salvation. God loved you so much that God sent Jesus to give you the perfect gift. Jesus is Immanuel or God with us. Jesus was born on that night in Bethlehem. He is God's perfect child. Jesus is God's perfect gift for you.

**Luke 2:16-19 So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.**

Good news is meant to be shared. This is how it is now and it is how it was then. The shepherds heard this good news and then went and they told how the angel spoke to them with this message of hope and promise. They went quickly to where Mary and Joseph and Jesus were. I invite you to go with haste and share this good news. Share it in and through the gifts you give and receive. Share it in the meals you eat. Proclaim the salvation of the world when you are traveling home from your family celebrations or when you are cleaning up after the family meal. If it happens that you are not with family this year let the Lord be your family. Let the Lord bless you with the gift of the Savior of the world. Remember that the Lord has already given you the perfect gift of love and that you have the greatest love every shared. You have the assurance of God's love and of God's protection

**Luke 2:20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.**

As you return to your home glorify God. Praise God for all you have heard and seen. Praise and glorify God because you have heard this message of love. God is with you. You have received the perfect gift today. You received the gift that will never be broken and will never run out of energy. He is Jesus. He is Lord. He is your salvation. AMEN