

Luke 2:1-20

¹ And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. ² (*And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.*) ³ And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. ⁴ And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) ⁵ To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. ⁶ And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. ⁷ And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

⁸ And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. ¹⁰ And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this *shall be* a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, ¹⁴ Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. ¹⁵ And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. ¹⁶ And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. ¹⁷ And when they had seen *it*, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. ¹⁸ And all they that heard *it* wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. ¹⁹ But Mary kept all these things, and pondered *them* in her heart. ²⁰ And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them. (KJV)

Luke 2:1-20

¹ In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ² (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ And everyone went to his own town to register.

⁴ So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around

them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "**Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.** ¹¹ **Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.** ¹² **This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.**"

¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

¹⁶ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told. (NIV)

INTRO - Christmas blessings of our Savior to each of you

Anyone who knows me knows that among my joys and passions is the hobby of fishing. I like to fish in streams, in lakes, and in the ocean; in summer and winter, for fish large and small, I love to fish. So, what does a fisherman do when you find a good spot? What do you do when you find a place where there are a lot of fish, and you are actually catching them? Do you tell others so they can fish too, or do you keep it to yourself so you can return and catch again? Many fishermen I know keep the good news of their favorite spots a secret . . . but More on this later.

I. This was a problem with the chosen people of God.

A. God had given them good news that he was sending a promised Messiah, one who would defeat Satan, who would overcome the guilt of their sin, and who would save the world.

1. God gave this promise in the very beginning to Adam and Eve.

2. One of our Old Testament Prophecies tonight talks about God reaching out with the Messiah to those who were lost to Him. **The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.**

3. In many verses of the Old Testament, the God of history has told people through the prophets that the coming Messiah and Savior would be a light . . . not just to the special people, but **a light to the nations.**

B. But, God's chosen people somehow wanted to keep the good news to themselves.

1. They saw themselves as special and others as unholy and undeserving of God's love.

2. Instead of sharing the promise of a savior for all, they seemed at least to push others away and to keep the promise of God for themselves.

C. We can point to the Jews and ask, 'How could they?' But unfortunately today's Christians, who should know better sometimes act in ways that keep the Good news of the Savior for themselves.

1. Christmas Eve two or three years ago I was greeting those who were coming to worship, and stopped to say hello to one family whom I didn't know. That's my normal custom, by the way. We had also sent out postcards as invitations to the whole town of Palmer, But when I approached, one lady she was upset and said, 'See, I knew he'd check on us. (Then she pulled out her postcard.) I have my invitation. It's alright if we're here, isn't it?

2. I'm not sure what we have done to give that impression, but some people think that Christians think God's love in the Savior is only for them.

II. So, please look with me at the story of the first Christmas.

A. While it may seem that the story is about Mary and Joseph, there are 7 verses about them, and 13 verses about the Shepherds.

1. Do you understand what God did?

2. When God sent the promised Messiah to save the world, when God reached down in love to a sinful world with His OWN SON, He made sure that people knew about the birth. God announced the birth to Shepherds!

A. If you want to find people who were seemingly unimportant, look at shepherds.

B. These were hourly wage earners working the midnight shift, having to camp outside.

C. Seemingly important people did not do this job.

D. But to God, everyone is important, and EVERYONE IS LOVED, whether they seem that way or not.

E. So God sent angels to these common laborers, not to the king, not to the priests, but to shepherds to tell them about the arrival of the long promised Messiah.

B. And look what the angels said to the shepherds.

1. **"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be FOR ALL THE PEOPLE. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."**

2. God intends the good news, God intends the Great Joy to be FOR ALL PEOPLE. BECAUSE GOD CREATED AND LOVES ALL.

C. God intends the Savior, the Promised Messiah, the Lord of all, to be not just for special people, but even for shepherds.

1. God intends the Savior, the Promised Messiah, the Lord of all, to be not just for Jews, for all people.

2. God intends the Savior, the Promised Messiah, the Lord of all, to be not just for those who believe in Jesus and are Christians now. God wants all people to know His good news, His love, His Savior, is for you.

III. This year my family and I got a Christmas card from Senator Murkowski. Now, I have met the Senator, and talked to the Senator. She might even remember who I am. But, we are not what I would call friends. But, sometimes politicians send out Christmas cards to supporters, even if they don't know them. One year I even got a Christmas card from the White House, but I've never personally met any sitting president.

A. But, the Christmas story is an invitation from God to all people, to you, a very personal invitation to you. It is for those who believe in Jesus now. But, God loves all people, and it is an invitation for those who don't now know or believe in Him.

1. God offers you good news through a Savior, The savior. This baby who was born lived a sinless life, because He is God's son. But this sinless Savior died to pay for our sins. And, this good news is not for some people it is for all people. This good news is for you.

2. God offers you joy, because of His love. In our world it is easy to feel unloved, because of our sins, because of the sins and hurts of others. But, CHRIST THE LORD, came for you! There is no one God does not love, though there may be some who don't receive the gift.

3. God offers you peace. This comes through the forgiveness of the Savior who defeated our sin and death, not only by dying, but by rising. This peace comes from knowing that all who believe in Jesus have eternal life in heaven, and are saved from the troubles of this world.

B. I also need to speak on behalf of our Christian congregation, St. John Lutheran Church.

1. God calls people to faith in Jesus and to work together sharing this good news.

2. The Church is God's plan, and God's idea.

3. Tonight I need all of you to know that God loves you, and sent Jesus for all people, and for you.

4. I need you to know that what we offer is not so much ourselves - because we are sinners who can unfortunately hurt others. But what we offer is Jesus Christ, a Savior for all people - all sinners - us included.
5. Please know you are always welcome, because it is our job to share the Savior, and faith in Him.

CONCLUSION - Back to my fishing spots. I know many who do not share their spots, for obvious reasons. Unfortunately, sometimes people say I have a big mouth and tell too much. But, what I really like to do is to take others fishing, and see them catch a fish.

What's more important is tonight God wants to share with you the greatest Christmas gift I ever received. **"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be FOR ALL THE PEOPLE. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."**