

## NIV Luke 2

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.

INTRO - I got a Christmas story from my wife this year. It seems it was the day after Christmas when a pastor of a church in San Francisco was looking out his office window at the front lawn and noticed the baby Jesus was missing from the outdoor manger scene. He went and looked and saw a little boy pulling a red wagon down the sidewalk. There in the wagon was the baby Jesus, tucked under a quilt. The pastor went up to the boy and asked, 'Where did you get your passenger, my friend?' The boy replied, 'I got him at the church.' 'O', replied the pastor. 'Why did you take him?' The boy answered, 'Well, I prayed to Jesus and told Him If He would bring me a red wagon for Christmas, I would give him a ride around the block in the wagon.'

. Why did I tell this story, is there any meaning there about the Christmas story. In many ways the answer is, 'No.' But, I start with this story, because tonight I want you to know that Christmas is all about that baby in the manger in the stable.

I. You see, God could have come in another way. It's all about the baby.

A. Let me explain it like this. About 4 years ago America invaded Iraq. While many people may disagree with this action, no one can deny that the leader of Iraq was a problem to the world, and a terror to his people. No one can deny that the leader of Iraq was a problem for our country. In order to deal with this problem, President Bush invaded. There was a good purpose for what our president was doing, but you know as well as I do what has happened. While there has been some success, even though the invasion was done to help the Iraqis and help our people, there has also been opposition, from all sides. It seems it can be hard for some to respond favorably to a forcible invasion.

B. I tell you that because the birth of Jesus, the song of the angels, whether you know it or not, this is an invasion, an invasion by a Holy Hero.

1. In Jesus, God is coming to this world to defeat the enemies of His people.
2. He is coming to defeat, overthrow, and demolish the Devil, and sin, and Death.
3. You and I suffer in this life because of our enemies, and God is coming to free us.
4. Ultimately this victory will be shown on judgement day, where sin and death and Satan are

overthrown.

5. But God didn't come that first time with an army, and swords, and weapons, he came as a baby.

II. We have a baby coming in our family. No, my wife and I are not going to have another baby, but our son and daughter in law are expecting our first a grand baby. We are excited. They are excited. Our other family and friends are excited. Is there anything people like any better than a baby?

A. God came in Jesus to deal with tough problems.

1. He came to deal with sin, sin like Herod who kills babies, sin like the man who attacked others in the valley recently. One of those attacked is a person who attends our church. God came to overthrow this sin, and selfishness.

2. God came to deal with ugliness, ugliness like selfishness that leads people to use substances to escape, and to overcome ugliness like selfishness that causes people to push these substances on others. I don't know how many lives are hurt when people give in to the temptation of a substance like drugs or alcohol, but God came to overthrow this sin, and selfishness.

3. God came to deal with the results of sin.

A. You see, not everything bad that happens to us is because of a sin we have committed, but the evil and pain in this world *are* the result of sin in our world.

B. I got a letter today that brought tears to my eyes, a letter from Kathryn Echhoff, daughter of former St. John pastor Rolland Fritz. Kathryn's Christmas letter said her husband, Kent, has lymphoma, and her 4<sup>th</sup> grade and 6 grade daughter, and she, are struggling with this blow. God came to overthrow this result of sin, and to overthrow death.

B. But, if God had come first as a judging conqueror what would have happened.

1. You see how people have responded to the well intentioned help our President tried to give.

2. You know how people still reject God's help and love, even though Jesus came as a baby. They still see him as judgmental.

3. So, God did not come like the proverbial 'bull in a china shop,' as a baby - with gentleness, and love, and angels singing of peace and joy.

C. A verse which really is a Christmas verse, which many don't think of when they think of Christmas verses is John 3:17. **For God did not SEND HIS SON into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.**

1. You see, God came to save us, to love us, to forgive us, to give us life. So he came as a child, in humility and poverty, in gentleness, in songs of angels to shepherds in the field.

2. You see, it's all about the baby.

III. I remember about 25 Christmases ago. On Christmas day 1980 my wife and I were exactly a month away from the birth of our first child. She had trouble Christmas shopping that year being 8 months pregnant. On Christmas day 1982 we were about 3 weeks away from the birth of our second child. Our lives have never been the same since, and we wouldn't have it any other way.

A. Do you think that Mary, or Joseph, or the Shepherds ever had the same kind of lives again after they saw the baby.

1. Angels appeared individually to Mary and Joseph. An angel CHOIR appeared to the shepherds.

2. Like it says about the birth of Jesus in verse 20, 'it happened just as it was told to them.' After the birth of the baby their lives were never the same again.

3. They still had troubles. The shepherds had to go back to work. Joseph Mary saw not only the birth of their son, but the attempts of the king to kill him. Mary saw not just the birth of her son but his ministry, and his death, and his resurrection.

4. But, God came as a baby, and they saw, and believed, and received. Throughout their lives the knowledge that God cared enough to come gave them strength. The knowledge that Jesus was here to save His people from their sins, gave them hope, and faith, and ultimately God gave them victory in heaven through faith in Jesus' victory.

5. They saw the baby, and they believed, so they followed. Their lives were never the same.

B. God is reaching out tonight to people with sin, and people suffering the results of sin, to people with problems and ugly secrets, to people with pain and failures. He is coming gently, in love wanting you to see His coming is love. He comes as a baby wanting you to receive his love, wanting you to know his love, to live in his love.

1. Tonight God calls you, 'Believe I love you, and that I came to you humbly, gently as a baby.'
2. Tonight God calls you, 'Believe I have come to overcome your sin, and your failures, and your judgement and death.'
3. Tonight Jesus calls you to follow Him, faithfully, in worship, in prayer, in obedience, knowing that while you may face struggles in this life, facing those struggles with the love of God who came as gently as a baby, and facing them with the God who came as a conquering holy hero, will make it all possible.
4. It's all about the baby.

CONCLUSION - My first story I got from my wife. My last story I got from our DCE, Jamie. In 1994, two American women were asked to teach morals and ethics, based on the Bible, in a school in an orphanage in Russia. It got to be Christmas time and they told the story of Jesus birth. For the children they were hearing for the first time about Mary and Joseph traveling to Bethlehem, and finding no room in the inn so that they placed the baby, the savior, in the manger. After the story the ladies used some scraps of paper and cloth to have the children make a manger. All went well and as expected until they got to the table of a 6 year old boy named Misha. There were 2 babies in his manger. The American lady asked why two babies, and Misha told the story of Mary and Joseph perfectly until it came time for Mary to lay Jesus in the manger, and then he made up a story. 'When Maria laid Jesus in the manger he looked up and saw me and asked me if I had a place to stay. I told him I have no mama, and no papa, so I don't have a place to stay. He said I could stay with him, but I told him I didn't have a gift to give him. But, I thought that if I could keep him warm that might be a good enough gift. Jesus told me, "if you keep me warm, that will be the best gift anybody ever gave me." So I got into the manger, and then Jesus looked at me and told me I could stay with him, FOR ALWAYS.' As Misha finished his story his eyes brimmed with tears which splashed onto his checks, his hands covered his face and his shoulders shook as he sobbed. He had found someone who would never abandon or abuse him, but stay with him, FOR ALWAYS.

You see, it is all about the baby. God comes tonight, to YOU, in gentleness and love. He wants you to receive Him in faith, in worship. He has come as the holy hero to conquer sin forever. He has come as the baby, to bring love, and strength, and peace and joy to your life as you live with Him. He wants you to follow in faith, in obedience, in worship. It's all about the baby. Amen.