

While they were there...

Luke 2: 1-20

¹At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire. ² (This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ All returned to their own ancestral towns to register for this census. ⁴ And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David's ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. ⁵ He took with him Mary, to whom he was engaged, who was now expecting a child.

⁶ And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. ⁷ She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.

⁸ That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep.

⁹ Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, ¹⁰ but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. ¹¹ The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! ¹² And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger."

¹³ Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying,

*¹⁴ "Glory to God in highest heaven,
and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased."*

¹⁵ When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

¹⁶ They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. ¹⁷ After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. ¹⁸ All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished, ¹⁹ but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often. ²⁰ The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them."

It is interesting to me, that the first reason for everyone to be traveling back to their home towns, was so the emperor could make sure they had the right number of people, and collect the tax he felt, he was due. It appears to have been all about the money. Then, all of a sudden, the emperor is concerned with the birth of Christ, and the impact Christ will have upon his kingdom.

Some believe Luke uses the Angels as a way of bringing even more authority to this story, thus the Angel announce Christ's birth. Was that why the emperor was concerned? The announcement from the Angel strengthening the point that Jesus was born to meet mankind's need. But why does he become so nervous, unless something else was at work in his life.

Illustration:

There was a pastor who had an elderly friend, and was somehow reminded of an old joke which is relates to our text.

“A curious bystander was watching a blacksmith with great interest. The blacksmith was hammering out a horseshoe. He had just finished with a shoe and had placed it aside to cool.

Without thinking, the bystander picked it up to look at it more closely, and even more quickly put it down. With a twinkle in his eye, the blacksmith commented, “Hot, wasn’t it?” Not to be made light of, the observer responded, “Nope, it just doesn’t take me long to inspect horseshoes.”

One could say, that it doesn’t take Luke very long to report on a child births, gaging from the length of his account of the birth of Jesus. We should remember, that Luke’s account of our Lord’s birth, is the only inspired account recorded in the gospels.

Of all of the things which Luke could have told us about, concerning the birth of Jesus, he chose to be brief about the details of Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem. This is seen by him beginning with, ***(It was the decree from Caesar, the census, which brought about the fact of the place of Jesus’s birth being in Bethlehem)***. Then, that the nearby shepherds came to witness the Messiah’s advent. These events, by virtue of the fact that they were chosen from many events which could have been reported, must be of considerable importance to Christians, especially Gentile believers, including ourselves.

So, I would like to see if we can learn something from the meaning of his words, and the application of our Savior’s birth, as recorded only by Luke, the divinely inspired historian.

1)The impact of the world upon God’s work...

“¹At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire. ² (This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ All returned to their own ancestral towns to register for this census. ⁴ And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David’s ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. ⁵ He took with him Mary, to whom he was engaged, who was now expecting a child.”

It was this decree that cause Joseph and Mary to go back to their ancestral town to register, and, it was there, where Jesus is born in a manger. He took Mary, it says, whom he was engaged to and she was with child.

Isn’t it the truth. We often find ourselves being pushed, or herded, toward various actions, things or events in this world, due to the law of the land. What we are required to do.

Today, we find ourselves needing to do, or accomplish certain things, because it is required of us, or, we might suffer consequences. Yet, God, our guide and Lord, watches over us and uses these moments or events, in our lives, to provide, protect and accomplish His will.

Everything which takes place in our lives has a purpose and helps to accomplish the work of the Lord in our lives. It is not by happen stance, or chance, that various events take place. They happen by His design. Or, are allowed to take place by His design. Our Lord tells us, everything has a purpose for those who are called by the Lord. God is fully aware of what He is doing and what is happening in and around us.

2)Using what we have been given to fulfill the Lord's plan...

"6 And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. 7 She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them."

I don't think there are very many of us, as we were growing up, who didn't have to make due with whatever we had or were given. I remember the times when we had little, or no money, so as a family of five we did whatever was needed to get by. My mom and dad did their best to provide – with the Lord's help – working hard to earn whatever they could. Often very little.

You know something, we made it through... By God's grace, we found what we needed when we needed it, and the Lord took care of us, time and time again. Just like Mary & Joseph, with the manger, the rag for cloths, and the straw for a mattress, we get past our difficult times, BY His grace.

We may not always have what we want, or, what we think we need, but we always had what the Lord knew we needed, and just when it was needed.

3)The Savior's promise for all mankind...

8 That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep.

9 Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, ¹⁰ but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. ¹¹ The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! ¹² And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger."

The shepherds represented the more common of people in that land and day. Our Lord could have been born in the best hotel, or in the Palace, but instead, the God who created all of us, lead them to a simple stable, a manger in a small town.

I have to believe that God in His infinite wisdom, knew that the world would not be able to relate to someone born in privileged surroundings, so He allowed Him to be born in a stable. A place that most all of society could relate to.

4)The Celebration of those who knew He was coming and witnessed His birth...

"¹³ Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying, ¹⁴ "Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased."

Notice the word, **suddenly?** This was not a staged occurrence or celebration, which the world thought was coming. It was an **instantaneous celebration**. It was filled with powerful feelings, found in the moment in life. The angels, and all those who were part of the “Heavenly host,” the armies of heaven, just started **“Praising God.”** You can almost hear them singing.

This to me, implies that the praise of God, is part of the peace found on earth. His peace which resides with all those, with whom He is pleased. Celebration is a natural reaction to something powerful which changes and improves our lives.

5) Here they come.... The people....

¹⁵ *When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, “Let’s go to Bethlehem! Let’s see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”*

¹⁶ *They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. ¹⁷ After seeing him, **the shepherds told everyone** what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. ¹⁸ **All who heard the shepherds’ story were astonished,** ¹⁹ but Mary kept all these things in her heart and **thought about them often.** ²⁰ *The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them.”**

Here we are generations later, still coming again and again, to worship the birth of our New Born Savior. I wonder, when we leave this place today, will we tell everyone, or anyone, about what, or who, we saw and or heard? **Will we even talk about it?**

It says the Shepherd and others spoke of it as they went back to where they lived or worked. Will we as we go to our homes, families and other places, talk about what Jesus means to us? Letting it be known who we worship? Wouldn’t we want to tell everyone about Him? I pray that will be our reaction as we leave this place.

So, perhaps, after we are all done today, on our way home, or, when we get home, after we have sung the songs, heard the story, and worshiped the birth of our Savior, maybe, we can share what we are feeling in our hearts with each other and our loved ones and neighbors, before we lose sight of this moment.

This is my challenge for each and every one of us. Today, we have drawn close to the place where Christ was born. Thus, we just have to let others know who He is. We just have to express our love for Him, as He did for us.

Closing Prayer