**A SAVIOR HAS BEEN BORN TO YOU**

December 23, 2012

Luke 2:1-14

Key Verses: 2:11 “Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.’”

Merry Christmas! May the baby Jesus come into your hearts and give you new joy and bless you in the new year abundantly.This passage is the Christmas message to the shepherds living out in the field, keeping watch over their flocks at night. The angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.” Jesus’ birth is the best news we’ve ever heard. If Martians visited the earth in a spaceship, it would be the biggest news in the world and the whole world would be excited. How much more, the arrival of the Son of God from heaven! Today, let’s think about Jesus’ coming to the earth as a baby, a baby in a manger, and why he is the Savior of the world.

Look at verse 1. “In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world.” The world was a Roman world. Rome ruled the world with the slogan, “Pax Romana; Peace of Rome,” which meant the Roman Empire rules the world with peace. However, the census was taken so that Caesar could raise taxes. As much as the Roman Empire prospered, the people of its colonies suffered. Look at verses 4-5. “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. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.” All the people of the colonies had to stop what they were doing and go to their ancestral homes to register. Their lives were greatly disrupted. Some people might have postponed their wedding day. But Caesar’s decree was inflexible. There was no exception to the decree. Mary’s pregnancy was full term. Usually, doctors advise pregnant women not to travel during the last 3 months. Mary had to walk 80 miles on foot, or maybe riding on a donkey. But there was no choice. Joseph went to his hometown to register with Mary, risking the health of both mother and baby.

Look at verses 6-7. “While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 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.” This story hints at the isolation and apathy of the times. Maybe someone with a clean, warm room at the inn felt a twinge of guilt when he heard Mary crying with labor pain. Someone almost wanted to help her, but decided to look after himself, hardening his heart and turning a deaf ear to a woman in agony. Many people might have done the same. For example, in a bus or subway, we know we should yield a seat to a senior person, but we harden our hearts and pretend that we are sleeping.

That there was “no room” reminds us of John 1:11. “He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.” Rejection and apathy were evident on that very first Christmas night. It was a kind of prophetic beginning. The city was crowded, full of hustle and bustle, busy because of the registration just like today at Christmas time. Christmas is the busiest season of the year. People are busy, trying to buy gifts for each other, yet the vast majority have crowded out Jesus Christ from their lives; they have no time and no room for Him. They say that at this season of the year there are more suicides, more nervous breakdowns, emotional disorders and depression than at any other time during the year. Why is that? Because people have no room for Jesus Christ who came to give them His peace and life!

As a responsible husband, Joseph wanted desperately to provide a room in which Mary could deliver the baby. But he could not afford it. Probably, he felt like dying. So with no choice, Joseph and Mary went into a stable. It was probably cold and damp and smelly. While they were there, it came time for Mary to have her baby. Mary must have said, “Joseph, it's time.” “‘Time for what?’ Joseph said. Oh, you mean its time! Oh dear.” What an odd way of bringing a Savior into the world! Odd? yes, but exactly the way it had been prophesied. The almighty of the universe, God the creator’s son was born in a stable, wrapped in strips of torn cloth, and laid in an animals’ food trough.

That was Jesus at his first coming. But what did his coming into the world really mean? Look at verses 9 and 10. Shortly after Jesus’ birth, did angels reveal this amazing event to all the kings of the world? No. Did they reveal that Jesus the Messiah had been born to the chief priests and Pharisees? No. Suppose an advertising firm was hired to break this amazing news. What would they do? They would call all the news networks and have a news conference, with the prime minister of Canada present. However, the angels visited shepherds in a field nearby. Shepherds? These shepherds were people at the bottom of society, working the night shift. Not a very likely group of people to approach with such lofty and significant news. What, then, is Luke's purpose in telling us this? That the Messiah did not come into the world for those who think themselves important, but rather for those who are humble and ordinary. Within the proclamation of the angels is a great message.

Look at verse 10 again. “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.’” The angel proclaimed that he was bringing "good news" of "great joy." Why is the birth of Jesus good news of great joy? It is because a Savior has been born to us. Look at verse 11. “Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord.” Who is this Jesus? Why is he the Savior of the world?

**First**, Jesus is God who came as a baby. What difference does it make that God became flesh and came to earth as a baby? The Almighty God could have just wiped out sin with his magic wand. The Almighty God could have sent a healthy, full-grown adult in a transport tube, or beam down as in Star Trek. But as a tiny, helpless baby. What does it mean? It means that Jesus became fully human. He experienced the same things as we’ve experienced. He could have died during delivery without a doctor in the stable. He woke up several times at night and cried for milk. He learned to talk. He learned to walk. He experienced hunger and thirst. He experienced sorrow and rejection. Hebrews 2:17 says, “For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.” Because he was fully human, he can sympathize with our weaknesses and help us. The Messiah came not as a pompous Caesar to exercise and consolidate power. No, this Messiah, humbled himself, came as a baby, lived a poor life, and served others. This was the absolute antithesis of what most Jews expected, and yet here he was, the Savior of the world, a tiny baby. Think of it. Infinite yet infant; eternal, yet born of a woman; almighty God, yet helpless; sustainer of the universe, yet needing to be carried in his mother’s arms. Ruler of the earth, yet rejected by men; Prince of Peace, yet hated and despised; holy and perfect, yet he would be nailed to a cross like the worst criminal. Praise Jesus who became a baby, a baby in a manger.

**Second,** Jesus saves men from their sins. To appreciate the good news we must first, understand and accept the bad news. Namely, we are terrible sinners, in need of God’s grace. Sin is disobeying God’s holy commands. Most importantly, sin is making God sorry. The symptoms of sin can be manifested in many different forms. I mentioned earlier people’s selfishness toward a woman crying in labor pains. They have no room for Jesus in their lives. Let’s think about what sin is in a few other ways and how Jesus saves us from sin.

Firstly, Jesus restores our broken relationship with God. Sin, in Greek, means, “to cut,” or “separate.” Sin separates us from God. Sin cuts relationships between people. Today, more than half of marriages end in divorce. Why are there so many broken relationships? One reason is that people think too highly of themselves. They think that they are right and their spouses are wrong. They are intent on proving that they are morally superior. They see it that way because they do not have God’s holy standard, namely, they do not see that they are terrible sinners. In order that man should see himself honestly, not in the light of his own relative goodness, but beside the perfect standard of God, the Son of God came to this world. Jesus said in John 3:19, “This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.” Jesus’ coming showed man how far short he came to God’s standard of righteousness. Alongside Jesus’ perfect life and works, man can see the sin and guilt of his own heart. This is the reason why many hated Jesus and crucified him on the cross. They felt condemned by the presence of the holy Son of God. Yet in spite of our sins, God loved us and sent his Son Jesus Christ to reconcile us to himself. Romans 5:8 says, “But God demonstrates his own love in this: While we were sinners, Christ died for us.” All we need to do is to acknowledge that we are sinners and accept God’s gift, Jesus Christ. If anyone here has not acknowledged their sins before God and been forgiven, I pray that today they may receive the baby Jesus in their hearts so that they may have a right relationship with God, and with others.

Secondly, Jesus saves us from fear. What is fear? Fear is the opposite of faith. Fear comes from the devil. The devil controls our thoughts and actions through the fear of death. Fear paralyzes men and make them useless (Heb 2:15). Fear is a common problem. Some students freeze when an exam paper is placed in front of them. Many students wanted to study the Bible during finals week. But they were afraid of getting a bad grade and gave into fear, even though they spend more time in watching TV than one hour of Bible study. Because of fear, we hold back from serving God; we retreat from doing what we really want to do because of the devil’s intimidation. Jesus can save us from fear because he is the horn of salvation. King David confessed, “My God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation.” (Psalm 18:2) When we take refuge in the horn of salvation Jesus, we are freed from fear. Now we can serve God freely without fear in holiness and righteousness. Luke 1:74,75 says, “to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.” God made man to be happy, serving him without fear in holiness and righteousness. This is what we really want to do. Don’t we? Everyone has a deep desire to be holy like the holy God, not a man who is profane, with no self-respect. But we could not serve God, we could not do what we really wanted to do because of the devil. But the baby Jesus, the horn of salvation, rescued us so we might serve God without fear all our days.

Thirdly, Jesus saves us from the darkness of sin. Once Jesus and his disciples saw a man born blind. His disciples felt sorry for him. They asked, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” They must have said to themselves, “Or is it God’s mistake?” Jesus answered them, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.” Jesus here tells them that man’s life purpose is not to pity oneself because of one’s human condition, but, whatever the situation might be, to display God’s glory. One’s life is not determined by an impersonal fate or by accidents or by chance. The loving Sovereign God is the Ruler and Lord of life. He created each of us for a purpose and he is working out that good purpose in each person's life; we need only to trust him. The man born blind may have thought he was the most miserable creature because he could not see his mom’s lovely face and beautiful nature with his eyes. His eyes were there only to weep. But Jesus says that he was obliged to display the glory of God to the whole world. He should not indulge in self-pity; he must find a way to display the glory of God even in his blindness. Jesus showed us how to overcome the darkness of sin. He had no medical instrument in his hand to heal the man. He had no cup of water in his hand. So he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man’s eyes. Jesus demonstrated that we can work with what we have to glorify God, instead of feeling miserable about what we do not have. We can do great things when we have Jesus, the light of the world.

May Jesus, our Savior, be born to you this Christmas and be with you in the new year 2013.