**A Savior Born to you**

December 21, 2014

Luke 2:1-20

Key Verse 2:11-12 “Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

Jesus was born in a manger as an expression of God’s love for us. He demonstrated the greatest humility of our God who came to this world as a Savior and a suffering servant and rejected king. God’s love was disguised as a helpless and poor baby being laid in a manger. Do you recognize him as your Savior and worship him as your king? Jesus came to this world with a humble beginning and lived as a suffering servant who ultimately died on the cross for our sins.

**First**, God used Caesar Augustus to fulfill his promise. Caesar Augustus was the greatest Roman emperor who coined the phrase “Pax Romana—peace of Rome”, but he was in the backdrop of Jesus’ birth story here. Luke told us that Caesar Augustus issued a census decree that should take place in the entire Roman world. It required all men and women to go back to their ancestral town and register in order to pay taxes. Joseph belonged to the line of David, and so he traveled a long distance (about 80 miles/120 km) on foot from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Here, God orchestrated human history, specifically the action of Caesar Augustus, to carry out his grand purpose of sending a promised Savior according to the prophecies. In Micah 5:2, it is prophesied that a savior was to be born in the town of Bethlehem. Had there been no census, Jesus would have been born in Nazareth. Thus, the prophecy in Micah 5:2, which says “But you, O Bethlehem, are not least among the ruling cities of Judah, for a ruler will come from you who will be the shepherd for my people Israel,” is fulfilled according to God’s promise.

**Second**, Jesus was born in miserable circumstances. Verse 7 said, “there was no room for them in the inn.” As Caesar Augustus issued the census decree, everyone had to obey. Mary and Joseph was an ordinary couple who seemed to be a victim of the circumstance of that time. Imagine how difficult it would have been for Mary to travel a long distance when she was full-term pregnant! Also, how would Joseph have felt when he was told “there was no room for them in the inn,” when he inquired about it and it was time for the baby to be born? The phrase ‘there was no room for them in the inn,” indicated the conditions of people at that time of Jesus’ birth. Most likely, the city was crowded as a lot of people were going back to their hometown Bethlehem to register themselves. It was possible that the innkeeper was likely to be cold and harsh towards this helpless and poor couple that was in a desperate situation. We know that if the couple were richer or could afford to pay more, they were likely to be offered a better place. Nevertheless, he offered them the place of a stable where the animals were kept. Again, God used this circumstance to illustrate how much the Son of the Most High lowered himself to the lowest; he was born in the place of animals, rejected by his people ultimately crucified on the cross as a sin offering for his people. 2 Corinthians 8:9 says “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.” Jesus became poor literally, coming to live in this world, for our sake. He did not have to become humble to this greatest extent but he chose to do so because of his love for us. He came to live as a human being like us and he experienced pains, sufferings, rejection and death so that we can relate to him very personally. We can approach him because he understands and walks through difficulties and temptations in our lives. 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.” He became our High Priest who is merciful and sympathetic towards us, offering intercessory prayers and petitions to the Father God on our behalf every moment.

**Third**, God announced the birth of Jesus to shepherds, not to kings or high priest. The shepherds were the poorest of the poor who kept watch at night for their flocks. They were the lowest class in that society and were looked down upon. Nevertheless, the angels of God brought the greatest news on Earth to them so that they could come to Jesus and worship him. Had Jesus been born in a palace, these people would not be able to approach him. In fact, the Magi went to King Herod to look for Jesus, a new king that was born, but they couldn’t find him there. Herod was worried and distressed by the birth of a new king, so he plotted to kill him resulting in the slaughter of babies in Bethlehem of two years old and under. Once again, we see that our Savior was born in the most humble and ordinary way that was hard for any person to fully comprehend and understand. This is the great wisdom of God that requires spiritual eyes and faith to see this truth.

Let’s think about what it means that “A Savior has been born to you,” and what it means that “Christ is the Lord” to each of us very personally at this time. Mathew 1:21 says, “She will give birth to a son and you are to name him Jesus for he will save his people from their sins.” John the Baptist cried out in John 1:29 when he saw Jesus coming to him on the Jordan River to be baptized, “Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” To understand the core meaning of Christmas, we need to understand this sentence. What does it really mean that ‘A Savior has been born to you’? The emphasis is on “A Savior, born to you.” Do you ever ponder if you need a Savior? If so, what kind of a Savior, who will save you from what? From your sin? What really is sin, as far as you know? Do you think that sin is the most fundamental problem in this world? If so, how and why did sin come into this world?

You may find it difficult to believe or accept that sin entered this world through the disobedience of our human ancestors, Adam and Eve, to God’s absolute command ‘not to eat from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.’ Because they disobeyed God’s command, sin and death entered this world. Since then, the devil, Satan, has been ruling this world with his power of sin and death. Even if you may not believe in the creation story and fall of man in the Garden of Eden, I want to tell you that the effects of sins are very real. Because of sins, human beings die physically and spiritually. Physical death is real and inevitable. You may think that it is a natural part of life, but it is not. Had men not disobeyed God, death would not have existed in our world. It would not be a part of our dictionary. So, here we are in this fallen world groaning and struggling to live a good life in this world. Life may be very good for you at the moment that you do not spend a minute to think about your need for a Savior. But, sooner or later, you will put your mind into what your life is meant to be and how you want to live it in the most meaningful way. Romans 3:23 says, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Sin is falling short of the glory of God. You may think you are a relatively good person, in comparison to someone a little worse off than you, but can you really claim that you are a good person before God? Human goodness is relative and does not meet God’s perfect standard. The Bible clearly says ‘there is no one righteous’ and the wages of sin is death. A young man once came to Jesus and asked “Good teacher! What must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus challenged his relativistic thinking by saying, “Why do you call me good? Only God is good.” The young man thought that he needed to keep all the rules perfectly to inherit the kingdom of heaven. When Jesus commanded him to go back and sell all his possession, give them to the poor and come and follow Jesus, the rich young man went away sad and his face downcast because he had great wealth that he could not give up.

As students and young people, I want us to think about what sin is that is relevant to us. Sin can be understood as the fear of many forms: fear of failure, fear of being insignificant or becoming a mediocre in life. Due to the fallen world mentality, we have been told since a young age to make meanings out of this life. We know that we are nobody in the grand scheme of things, but we strive to become somebody so that our lives matter, at least in our own eyes. Because the world is such a temporal place where our lifespan is short, another way of making meaning in this life is to make the most (money, opportunities or recognition) out of this world. Either we are not good enough or we think we are too good. These are not biblical values based on the truth of God’s words. We are significant and valuable enough that God sent his Son to die for us, redeeming us from our sins so that we can be with God in his kingdom and spend eternity with him. When God created human beings, he said that it was very good (Genesis 1:31). Because of sins that disfigured us and destroyed the images of God in us, however, we are no longer good as we would like to think we are. Some people think they are good, but as I mentioned before they are not good enough before the Perfect and Holy God. Their good deeds do not simply measure up to the standard of God. In fact, the Bible says, our good deeds are like filthy rags before the righteous God. If you are too lowly in spirit and think that you are not good enough, there is good news for you. If you think you are good, and do not need a savior for your life, I want you to think again about your human goodness. Humble yourself and examine your heart carefully in light of the word of God you hear today. A savior has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord. Christ is the Greek term for the Messiah, the Anointed One who is the King of kings and Lord of lords. I invite you to welcome him into your life and let him become your Savior and Lord of your life, and begin to trust in him as your personal Lord and King over your life. I can testify to you that your life will never be the same again. My life is never the same again as I seriously begin a personal relationship with Jesus and let him be the king, ruling over every aspect of my life.

The sign that the angels of God gave to the shepherds was that they would see a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. This was a shocking message because it was the most unlikely place where a king and savior would be born. This news would not make the headline of any newspaper. Probably, Caesar Augustus’ census decree would make the headline because people needed to go back to their hometown. The angels praised God saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.” Jesus’ birth glorified God in the highest because the Son willingly lowered himself to the lowest to be born as a Savior of mankind from their sins. The angels praised God for sending his own Son to this world to accomplish his salvation work, promised in Genesis 3:15 and reaffirmed throughout the Old Testament prophecies. And the birth of Jesus brought peace to mankind in twofold. One is peace with God and the other is peace of God. Peace with God means reconciliation. Romans 5:1 says, “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” We are no longer enemies of God but rather are called holy and blameless children of God in his sight. Peace of God means the divine peace from God that transcends all understanding given to those on whom God’s favor rests, namely believers (Philippians 4:6). Jesus is called the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). Jesus says in John 14:27, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” This peace is the fruit of the Holy Spirit within us (Galatians 3:22). This peace is not conditioned by external circumstances whether we are going through storms of life or in good seasons. I pray that you will receive and experience the divine peace of God that he has given us during this Christmas season even though your circumstances maybe difficult and hopeless.

The truth that our Lord Jesus was born in a manger inspires us to live a humble and sacrificial life serving others. We call this legacy the manger spirit. This is one of the most important spiritual legacies of our UBF ministry that our founders and forefathers lived out. It is important to recognize small, ordinary and insignificant things that hold tremendous wisdom of God. We focus on teaching the Bible one-to-one faithfully with students. Many students come and go and may not realize the importance of studying God’s words and living according to its teachings. We often get discouraged and misunderstood, besides being given no credit or recognition by anyone. These are invisible and insignificant things we devote our lives to, doing that go unnoticed and even despised. Nevertheless, we get encouragement and recognition from God. We are doing these things faithfully before God, not before men. We believe that God will bless our manger ministry and use us to carry out his good work in and through us in our generations among college students. I pray that God will give you a manger spirit to participate in his campus mission beginning with one-to-one Bible study with students who have obedient mind and answers his calling for discipleship.

The core meaning of Christmas is a Savoir has been born to you and me. The angels of God announced the birth of Jesus as good news of great joy to the world. Jesus’ birth in a stable revealed the greatest love of God and the absolute humility of our Lord Jesus who began his life on earth in a manger and died on the cross for our sins. This is the greatest news of God’s unconditional love for us sinners that we have ever received. It made Christmas significant as it is and our lives worth living. May the birth of Jesus inspire you to realize your need for a Savior and our commitment to serve him as the Lord of our lives and everything.