

BUMC Weekly Bible and Sermon Study

Sermon: Christmas Day Service

Scripture: Luke 2:1-20

Key take-aways from the Scripture

- This section of Luke tells the story of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem. The Life Application Study Bible commentary explains this section as, "Luke is the only Gospel writer who related events he recorded to world history. His account was addressed to a predominantly Greek audience that would have been interested in and familiar with the political situation. Palestine was under the rule of the Roman Empire with Emperor Caesar Augustus, the first Roman emperor, in charge. The Roman rulers, considered to be like gods, stood in contrast to a tiny baby in a manger who was truly God in the flesh."
- Chapter 2 begins with Joseph and Mary leaving their home and going to Bethlehem in Judea so that they can register for the census. This census, or registration, was used to register for military conscription as well as taxes. Verse 6 says, "...while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born." There was no lodging available for them to stay in and she laid the baby in a manger. Jesus being laid in a manger forms the basis for the belief that Jesus was born in a stable. Mangers served as feeding troughs for the animals in the stable.
- Verses 8-14 is referred to as the moment when heaven touches the earth. In this section, the angels announce to the shepherds in the fields that Jesus is born! Verse 10 is the first public announcement of "good news of great joy that will be for all people." Verse 11 offers three important titles used by the angels in describing the child: Savior, Christ, and Lord! Verse 14 speaks of a "multitude of the heavenly host" with the angel praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" (NRSV)
- Verses 15-20 speak of the witnesses of the Good News, as the shepherds quickly left to find Mary and Joseph and this child laying in the manger. "When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them." They were the first to hear the Good News and the first to tell others this Good News!

Key take-aways from the Sermon

- Consider this question: what brings you to the manger tonight (on Christmas Eve)? What is it that you hope to take with you from this story?
- Consider the providence of God in this story: there is providence in Caesar's new tax law that he unwittingly fulfilling the biblical prophecy. It was Micah who predicted that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, however Mary and Joseph lived in Nazareth, but Caesar's decree prompts their trip to David's town!
- It is amazing when we think about what a baby can do in our lives. There is gold in this stable...it is in the virgin birth, through Joseph's obedience, it's in Mary's capacity to say yest to the Spirit, it's in the humble accommodations, it's n the eagerness of the shepherds, it's in the determination of the wise men.
- It is not just in the earthly response but also in the heavenly response. In Luke 2:13-14, when the angels share the news with the shepherds in the fields, all the sudden a mass choir of angles sang praises to God!
- This word "good will" in the Greek means *kindness*! It is as if heaven and earth intersect in that manger, and they do! Heaven comes down and glory fills the air! The result is peace! Shalom! Wholeness! Well-being!
- Isaiah foresaw this centuries before it even happened (in Isaiah 9:6) "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."
- That baby in the manger will grow up one day to preach on a hillside, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for you shall be called sons and daughters of God." On the night before this baby died, He would say, "Peace I leave with you. My peace I give unto you, not as the world gives, so don't let your hearts be troubled and neither let them be afraid."
- Shalom! Love! Peace is needed more than ever around the world. Shalom is what love looks like in the flesh. The embodiment of love in the context of a broken creation, shalom pulls us together and restores us!
- Christ is love and peace is the embodiment of love in swaddling clothes. This is the gold of the manger. It's God's gift to you, and through you to give to the world! Jesus is love!!!

Questions for Personal Reflection or Group Discussion

- What were your key take-aways from the sermon? How can you apply this to your everyday life?
- Why do you think Luke mentions Caesar Augustus' decree in this section of his Gospel? What purpose does this serve?
- What unique aspects about Jesus' birth does Luke's Gospel reveal with his infancy narrative?
- What brings you to the manger? What is it that you hope to take with you from this story?
- How have you sensed and felt God's peace within you?
- How will you bring shalom/peace to the world?

