

“For Unto Us A Child is Born”

Isaiah 9:6 – *For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government is upon his shoulders, and his name is called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

An elderly Florida woman did her Christmas shopping and, upon returning to her car, found four young men in the act of leaving with her vehicle.

She dropped her shopping bags and drew her handgun, proceeding to scream at the top of her voice, "I have a gun, and I know how to use it! Get out of the car!"

The four teenagers didn't wait for a second invitation. They got out and ran. The lady, somewhat shaken, then proceeded to load her shopping bags into the back of the car and get into the driver's seat.

She was so shaken that she could not get her key into the ignition. She tried and tried, and then it dawned on her why.

A few minutes later, she found her *own* car parked four spaces further down in the parking lot.

She loaded her bags into the car and drove across the street to the police station to report her mistake. The sergeant to whom she told the story couldn't stop laughing.

He pointed to the other end of the counter, where four pale and shaken teenagers were reporting a car-jacking by a mad, elderly woman described as "white, less than five feet tall, glasses, curly white hair, and carrying a large handgun."

No charges were filed.

It's Christmas and there are many bizarre stories in the news, and hopefully, you have finished your shopping, wrapped all your presents, cooked all your brownies, and are ready to celebrate the real meaning of the holiday.

We have gathered tonight to remember and to celebrate the birth of Jesus which occurred a little more than 2,000 years ago.

An event which transformed history. An event which transformed reality, and an event which has transformed my life, and I know, many of your lives.

The birth of Jesus was a supernatural birth.

The birth of Jesus was a miraculous birth.

The birth of Jesus was an intervention into the natural order by the Divine.

God, who is beyond time and space, entering time and space.

God, who has no body, becoming flesh and blood.

God, who no one is able to see His Glory (His Presence), revealing His Glory to the human race.

No birth has made as much of a difference in peoples' lives as the birth we celebrate tonight.

No birth has impacted the world for good more than the birth we celebrate tonight.

The Gospel of Luke tells us that God has entered into His very creation by being born as a baby...

A **baby** who would be a Savior.

A **baby** who would be given the name Jesus.

A **baby** who would be called the Christ, meaning, the Messiah, the Anointed One.

To the secular culture of *that* day,
this birth was no different from many others –
a poor woman with no place to stay
a child born out of wedlock
just another baby.

To the secular culture of *our* day, this birth is no big deal –
just a time to make money off of sales
just a time to take holiday
just a time to spend time with friends and family.

However, this baby's birth was a long-awaited birth.

This was a birth which had been foretold and documented many times, in many ways...

The prophets in the Old Testament, the Hebrew Scriptures,
had predicted the coming of the Messiah for *hundreds* of years before ...

Moses: Of the twelve tribes of Israel, Moses predicted to which Hebrew tribe the Messiah would be born... (**Judah**)

Samuel: Of all the families in the Tribe and lineage of Judah, Samuel predicted to what family... (**The lineage of David**)

Micah: Of all the cities of the world, Micah prophesied where he would be born... (**Bethlehem**)

Daniel: Of all the years humanity has known, Daniel prophesied when he would be born... (**between four hundred years and five hundred years after his life-time**)

Isaiah: Of all the things a Messiah would do, Isaiah prophesied what his ministry would be...
(**Proclaim salvation**)
(**Heal the sick**)
(**Care for the poor**)
(**Die for an offering for sin**)

Zechariah: Of all the deaths a person can die, Zechariah prophesied how he would die... (**Raised up and pierced through**)

David in Ps. 16: that he would not remain dead...
(**His body would not decay**)

Isaiah (9:6) tells us who this Messiah would be: *For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government is upon his shoulders, and his name is called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

Mighty God
Everlasting Father
Prince of Peace

A baby who is Almighty God
A baby who is the Everlasting Father
A baby who is the Prince of Peace

Yes, for hundreds of years the Hebrew people waited and then the long-awaited birth occurred.

But many people missed it.

*Many missed it then,
and sadly, many miss it even now.*

On that night years ago, an angel and a heavenly host appeared to broadcast the news to the shepherds who were out in the fields with their sheep saying:

“Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.”

So the shepherds made the trek into Bethlehem to see what was going on.

There they found Mary and Joseph, and the baby Jesus lying in the manger.

Of course, they did not know the details of this baby’s life.

- That this child would grow up to be a great teacher for God
- That this child would grow up and be a miracle worker
- That this child would grow up and heal the sick, bring dead people back to life, and challenge the religious establishment of his day.
- That this child would offer his life as a sacrifice for sins, be crucified on a Roman cross, and then rise again from the dead.

No, this is no ordinary birth

God has entered our world to tell us we are loved.

God has entered our world to tell that we are significant.

God has entered our word to tell us that we are important

God has entered our world to tell us that he desires to be in relationship with us.

“Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.”

This text from Luke 2:10-12 tells us several things which are still appropriate for us today.

1) The Angel says: I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people.

This baby was born *not just* for the Jewish people, but for all people.

This baby was born *not just* for middle easterners, but for all people.

This baby was born *not just* for the rich or the poor, but for all people.

This baby was born *not just* for the political and intellectual elite, but for all people.

Some people want to believe that Jesus is only for their type of people
for their group
for their race

Other people want to believe that Jesus isn't relevant anymore to anyone—
“our society is too advanced for primitive religion...
after all, we have the cell phones and the Internet
Modern medicine
Rocket science
Digital pictures
And we can even wage war with our computers and satellites

Yet, we still see the results of the Fall of Humankind in the Garden of Eden.

Such blatant and malicious evil still rears its face.

Just look at what we have seen in Syria and Iraq this past year

- innocent people beheaded just because they were not Muslim or the right kind of Muslim
- babies sliced in two with the sword just because their parents wouldn't convert

Look at the kidnappings and rapes and brutal killings we have seen in Nigeria and Kenya and Sudan

In Pakistan just last week a school was targeted in Peshawar, and according to its bishop, not only were all those children killed, but the way in which they were killed was so brutal and inhumane, to use his words: *no human being with any fear of God could do such acts.*

Evil is rampant in our culture as well....

Murder
Theft
Rape

Go listen to what the Department of Family and Children's Services has to face every day, and the atrocities people are doing to their own children.

Saw a video clip of guys who steal women's purses while they are pumping gas...

While the lady is pumping gas, standing at the back of the car putting gas in her car, the thief sneaks into the car from the other side without being seen, and steals her purse.

To those who say that Jesus is not relevant anymore, the Scriptures say that he is the only solution for the evil of the world and the evil in the hearts of human beings.

What the angel is announcing here is that it doesn't matter whose heart – this Good News is for *all* the people.

I bring you good news of Great joy that will be for all people.

2) A second thing the angel told the Shepherds is that a Savior has been born.

A savior is an Advocate
A savior is a redeemer
A savior is someone who helps someone when there is a critical need.
A savior saves...

This baby IS a savior and he saves us in many ways, but the primary way is that

He saves us from our sins.

We have all been touched by sin – our own and those of others.

We been touched

By hatred
By selfishness
By immorality
By materialism
By lies
By racism
By pride

And what is more incredible is that none of us can stand before a mirror of God's perfection and claim that we ourselves are without sin.

All of our hearts are tainted.

Each one of us has sinned and fallen short of God's Glory.

At some point, each one of us has said in no uncertain terms:

"God, I don't want you in my life."

Most of us dress it up – *I was having a bad day.*

This little lie won't hurt

One look isn't going to do anyone harm

Noone will know if I took it

But you don't know what they have done to me.

It is still sin. And because we are all tainted with it — We do need a savior.

Matthew, in his telling of this incredible story tells us what this Savior would do once he would be born –

In Mt.1:21 he quotes the words of the angel to Joseph – *"You are to give him the name Jesus for he will save his people from their sins."*

Jesus: Yeshua (Joshua) in Hebrew, meaning "the Lord is my salvation".

The savior, this baby, will save people from their sins.

The prophet Isaiah, 600 years before the birth of Jesus, spoke on God's behalf about the Messiah to come:

Isa 53:4-6

4 Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.
5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

(NIV)

And that is what this baby did on a roman cross 33 ½ years later.

God entered our mess of sin in order to save us.
He has the power to change and clean the human heart.

The angel told the Shepherds is that *a Savior* has been born.

3) A third thing which the Angel told the Shepherds is that God Himself was going to be born.

Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you: he is the Messiah, the Lord.

He is Christ
He is the Messiah
He is the Lord.

This is what the church calls the Incarnation

God entering into the human race in the person of Jesus, this baby.

This baby was to be fully God and fully human at the same time.

The Son of God and the Son of Man at the same time.

Christianity does not teach that Jesus was
just another human being
just another prophet
just another religious leader
just another do-gooder

No, Christianity teaches that this baby was both God and human at the same time.

That in him was God Himself
the very glory of God
the very essence of God

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

God from God
Light from God
Very God from very God (as the Creed says)

C.S. Lewis expresses it this way after studying the life and teachings of Jesus.

He said if a person honestly examined this man's life and teaching that he will come to one of three conclusions: That Jesus was either:
a liar,
a lunatic,
or he was the Lord.

Was he a liar?

He said he was God

He said if anyone looked at him, they had seen the Fathers
He said he and the Father were one
He said he was the Messiah
He said he had the power of life and death
He said he could forgive sins

Yet, as Lewis points out, his teaching, his movement, and his followers espouse truth and honesty.
How could a man who did the things he did be a liar?

Was He a lunatic?

Anyone who said the kinds of things Jesus said today, we would think he was crazy.

There are many mental health institutions today who have people committed who are saying the things Jesus said.
I have personally heard them.

Yet, Jesus was able to back up the things he said.

His miracles
His healings
His bringing dead people back to life

His teachings and principles became the foundation of what was “western civilization,” and have impacted hundreds of millions of lives – if not more...

Lewis concludes that if a person takes an *honest look* at Jesus, she will rule out that he was a liar and that he was a lunatic – and come to the conclusion that he was and is who he claimed to be.

Lord, God Almighty. The Messiah.

Now, I know for some of you this may be a little difficult to swallow.

But I ask you examine the facts.

Look at the impact of this baby on history
Look at the impact of this baby on personal lives.

Have you ever considered how life would be different on this planet if this baby had not been born?

Set aside the spiritual salvation issue for a moment, and apply the theme of the movie: “It’s a Wonderful Life” to the life of Jesus.

What would our planet be like if he had never been born?

His Presence and His teaching have empowered Christians in every generation for the past 2000 years to change the course of history.

Western civilization was built on the teaching of Christ.

The great art of our world – so much came from those seeking to tell the glory of God

So much of the great classical music came from musicians seeking to glorify God in their music.

The first scientists were Christians who wanted to understand God's world better.

Care for the sick and for the needy brought the building of hospitals and research for medicines and better treatments.

The whole concept of personal and religious liberty comes from the pages of the New Testament.

The founders and architects of this country spoke of building a nation on the principles of Jesus Christ so that freedom would blossom.

Historically, some of the best universities in this country were founded to train and educate people to preach the Gospel – Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Brown, to name a few.

We could go on and on – How would this planet be different if this baby had never been born?

I submit to you that life would be a LOT different.

I submit to you, *my life*, would be a lot different!!

As you listen to the press reports about what Christians in other parts of the world have been doing in the face of such violence and opposition to their Faith, does it make you wonder why?

Why didn't those Iraqi Christian parents just deny Jesus and convert to Islam so their children could live?

Why do many Christians in Nigeria continue to attend Church when they know that they might not return home (they say good-bye to each other before they leave)?

How can Christian doctors and nurses and missionaries continue to go to West Africa to help those suffering from the Ebola virus when they know they might not come back alive?

Why is it that young couples can move their young families from North America to a totally different culture in some obscure place on the backside of nowhere, living without so many of the luxuries we take granted, in order to minister to the poor, the needy, the orphans, in the name of Christ?

It is because of this baby who we celebrate tonight.

He changes one's life – and it's for the good!

Jesus grew up to be the *unordinary* man –
he was the Lord of Lords,
the very God of Gods,
entering the human race to express his love and desire for relationship.

It's incredible

It's awesome
and
It's true!

For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government is upon his shoulders, and his name is called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace

There were many in Israel who missed the love that God sent in the form of a baby in a manger.

He was not what they were expecting.

He wasn't the secular King they longed for,
the Ruler or the Conqueror they anticipated
so they missed the
Messiah when he came.

I wonder what you might be looking for or expecting this night.
I wonder what expectations you are placing on what God must be like.

Could it be that the answer you seek was wrapped up in swaddling cloths and laid in a manger?

Could it be that this one whom we remember to tonight carries the key to your heart?

I submit to you that he is.

**HE SAYS TO THOSE WHO HAVE LOST YOUR WAY IN THE DARKNESS:
I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD; LOOK TO ME.**

**TO THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE HUNGRY FOR DEPTH AND MEANING:
I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE; EAT OF ME.**

**TO THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE SEEKING DIRECTION AND GUIDANCE:
I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE; COME FOLLOW ME.**

TO THOSE OF YOU WHO FEAR DEATH AND THE AFTER-LIFE:

I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE, SHE WHO BELIEVES IN ME WILL LIVE EVEN THOUGH SHE DIES.

**TO THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE THIRSTY FOR NOURISHMENT IN YOUR SOUL:
I AM THE VINE AND YOU ARE THE BRANCHES; DRINK OF ME.**

WHATEVER YOUR SHORTCOMING,
HE SAYS:
**I AM THE ALPHA, AND THE OMEGA
THE ALEPH AND THE TAV; THE BEGINNING AND THE END.**

I wonder what you might be looking for or expecting this night.
I wonder what expectations your are placing on what God must be like.

I hope you don't, like so many in throughout history, miss the Messiah, the Lord God.

If you have never received God's gift to the world, this Jesus, I encourage you tonight to invite him into your life...
and then join us at His Table where we will rejoice and remember all that He has done for us on the cross, and anticipate that Day when
we will share in His Heavenly banquet.

*For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given. and the government is upon his shoulders, and his name is called Wonderful Counselor,
Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace*