

Luke 2:1-20

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 25 December 2022

[0:00] Luke chapter 2, we'll read verses 1 through 20. I know a portion of this we've already read. One of the wonderful things that we get when we preach Christmas series and we go through the Christmas story that we read it multiple times.

I have already read this passage this morning. One of our traditions around our home is before we open any gift, on Christmas morning we read the Christmas story and then we sing Happy Birthday Jesus.

We remind ourselves of why we're gathering together. And yes, the more kids that move out, the less cohesive we sound, but we still sing it. It's okay.

But we gather together, so I read this text multiple times during the season, but so thankful for it. If you are physically able and desire to do so, I'm going to ask if you would join with me as we stand together and we read the Word of God, found in Luke chapter 2, starting at verse 1.

We were going to stop at verse 14, but let's go on down to verse 20 so that we can get it in its entirety. Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth.

[1:08] This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him and was with child.

While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son, and she wrapped him in cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night.

And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them, Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy, which will be for all the people.

For today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for you. You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.

And suddenly there appeared with an angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace among men with whom he is pleased. When the angels had gone away from them into the heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, Let us go straight to Bethlehem then and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.

[2:30] So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph and the baby as they lay in the manger. And when they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this child. And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds.

But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds went back glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen just as had been told them. Let's pray.

Lord, thank you for your word. Thank you for the opportunity of gathering together this Christmas morning. We thank you for the word which we have read. And Lord, we pray that we would see it with clarity and newness.

Lord, that we would be excited about our text, that it would be so much more than just times of gathering together. But Lord, that it would excite us and lead us to worship and adoration and praise. Lord, I thank you for this opportunity.

And we ask it all in Christ's name. Amen. You may be seated. The last several weeks, we have been looking at when God interrupts history. And I know it's a little bit repetitive, but it bears repeating because we know that something happened on that Christmas day.

[3 : 34] We know that something amazing happened that changed the course of history, that even how we tell time in history is dictated by this one event. We know that when God chose to interrupt history, he gave an announcement.

Now, that's not something big or earth-shaking to us, but we also realize that this announcement came 400-plus years after God went silent. That is, he had been silent for over 400 years.

Not a word from God had been spoken, and yet he broke his silence in the temple as Zechariah was burning incense on the altar of incense. And he broke it, saying the same thing he had said as we read the end of the Old Testament in the book of Malachi.

He picks up the story, so to say, and he continues to tell the same story. We have seen that he makes an announcement from heaven. And it was an announcement over a span of about 15 months that was really to a very small number of people.

The only major group of people, whereas there were multiple people there, were the shepherds staying out in the fields. We know that over 15 months, God had something to say, and he said it loud and clear, and he was speaking of one who was coming, that he was speaking of the child that would be born, that this child would change the course of history.

[4 : 46] We know that when we've heard and seen that when God made that announcement, man had to make an adjustment, that is, when God speaks, we have to react to what God has said. So many people want God to say a word, oh, I just want to hear a word from God, but so fewer people say, I want God to tell me something that's going to cause me to do something different.

Now that's important, because when God speaks, he expects his people to respond, and it is implied that when God says something, that we will adjust. Because if we do not adjust to what has been declared to us, then we have not really heard it.

We have not really listened to him. Maybe some of you parents understand this. There's a difference between hearing what I say and listening to what I say. You can hear it, and it can go right out of your head.

If you listen to it, that means you do something in response to what I have said. So we see that man had to make an adjustment. This adjustment would be that which was used of God to awaken a sleeping world.

But we see that when man started doing things, people started paying attention. Very clearly we see it. When the Magi came from the east and followed the star, all of a sudden the world was awakened, because King Herod had to notice that something amazing was going on here.

[5 : 59] So we come now to this final point of when God interrupts history. And it is the advent of Christ. The advent of Christ. The word advent simply means coming.

Now when we speak of his advent, we also know that there is a second coming or a second advent. For those of you that were gathered with me last night, some of this would be repetitive, but that's okay because I do better when I hear things multiple times, and we see how it all blends together. If we take the date of around 1400 B.C., in the mid-1400s B.C. as the Exodus event, which we date that from the reign of Solomon and go back, there are two dates.

I know you'll look them up because you are good students of the Bible. And there are two dates that are commonly given, the 1400s and the mid-1200s. There's an early date and a lighter date. My personal understanding, it's okay if we disagree on the exact date of the Exodus event.

That's not a big rock issue, right? But if we date it back from the reign of Solomon, which we are giving a date, so many years after they came into the Promised Land, you get to the mid-1400s.

[7 : 11] Coming out of Egypt in the mid-1400s, wandering around in the wilderness, there was a prophetic word declared. In the mid-1400s, the word was, I see him, but not yet.

A star shall arise out of Judah, and he shall shepherd his people. A scepter shall not depart from his hand. Now that's found in Numbers 24, 17. I see him, but not yet.

A star shall arise out of Judah, and the scepter shall never depart from his hand. So with that date, the mid-1400s, all of a sudden we have this prophetic declaration. Now prophecy is not someone standing up.

We need to understand what prophecy is. Prophecy is not someone standing up, telling you what is going to happen in the future. It is not future telling. It is forth telling. It is someone telling you what

God has declared to them.

Right? What they have heard in the inner room, they declare in the public square. So it is forth telling what God has said. So in the mid-1400s, God says, a star is coming.

[8 : 11] The scepter shall never depart from his hand. It's a ruler. If we fast forward 700 years, we get to the mid-700s B.C., and as we've seen Wednesday night and last night, there were two prophets who were contemporaries one of another, Micah and Isaiah.

Both of them prophesying in the mid-700s B.C. Micah makes this prophetic declaration to the common man. He is speaking on the street corners, and he tells the common man, I've got a word of hope for you.

And the word of hope for you is, but you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, too little to be counted among the clans of Judah. Now, if you want to give the common man hope, you tell him that God's going to use even the most insignificant of places.

That's what Bethlehem is. We see Bethlehem as important. They did not. He says, But you, Bethlehem of Ephrathah, too little to be counted among the clans of Judah. Out of you one shall come forth to me.

And God makes this same declaration that was declared 700 years prior. He will shepherd my people. He will rule. We have seen that, and there's this promise here that there's a ruler coming. Now God tells us where the ruler's coming from.

[9 : 17] In that same time, Isaiah in the courts of the kingdom makes the declaration found in Isaiah 53. But that ruler who is going to come is also going to die. And he's going to bear the iniquities of man, and he's going to pay the price of man.

But even after his death, he will live to see his people. So we have this anticipation of God saying over a span of about 700 years, One is coming who will rule eternally.

Micah gives us one little tidbit of information which we need not neglect. His goings forth are from everlasting. That is, his goings forth are from everlasting.

He is not just one coming to rule, but he is one who has eternally existed in the past and will reign for all of eternity. The eternal one is coming.

When we fast forward another 700 years, we come to a little town in Bethlehem, and we find the advent of Christ. The one that had been long anticipated has now come.

[10 : 22] That baby, wrapped in cloths, lying in a manger, is the eternal one from the eternity past and the eternal one from the eternal future. He is the one that has been anticipated.

Here is his coming. And we stand amazed at three great aspects of his coming. Number one, we see the sovereign leading implied or displayed with the advent of Christ.

We see the sovereign leading. It says, now in those days. Now in those days. It doesn't sound like much to you, but Luke is what?

A physician. Luke is riding with a physician's mentality. Luke is very peculiar about details. You want a physician or a doctor to pay attention to details, right?

You want them to know what they're talking about. You want them to be clear in everything they see. They tend to notice things. Luke is a physician who is riding to most excellent Theophilus.

[11 : 20] We understand that. And he is riding, giving a detailed account. It is Luke which tells us which hand was withered that Christ healed because physicians pay attention to such things.

Where the other gospels just said it was a hand. Most people don't really care which hand it was, but Luke, being a physician, can tell you exactly which hand it was. And he makes this declaration now in those days.

Here we see the reality that the time of the prophetic words fulfillment has come to be. Paul says later, in the fullness of time, at the exact time, at the right time, In those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth.

Here we see this wonderful reality of the sovereigns leading. We know that the Bible declares to us in the Old Testament that God holds the hearts of the kings in the palm of his hand and he turns them to and fro how he wants.

That he directs the rulers of the kingdoms of the world. That's not just a past event. That's a present reality. God is still in control of the rulers of the world.

[12 : 26] I know we have a lot of questions. Well, if he's in control, why does this, this, this, this, and this happen? And we don't have time to get into that right now, maybe another day. But what we understand is that in his sovereignty, at the right time, God so orchestrated that the prophetic

word which he had declared, because Mary and Joseph are living in Nazareth, that they need to be in Bethlehem, and then they will later need to go to Egypt because he will be born in Bethlehem.

He will be called out of Egypt, but he shall be called a Nazarene. What a wonderful prophetic word. All three of them meet in one individual. And we see that God does this through his sovereign leadings of even the rulers.

If God can cause a false prophet to make a true prophecy, then God can surely move the hearts of kings and rulers to issue a decree that would move people where he wants them to be. The application to this is clear.

Nobody in the course of history is ever accidentally anywhere. You are where you are today because of the sovereign leading of God. While preaching on Mars Hill in the city of Athens in Acts chapter 17, Paul makes this declaration that God ordains where man will reside and live.

Every moment of your life and every time of your existence has the sovereign leading of God upon it. You say, oh no, I chose to come here. It was my decision to be here. I moved here and I chose this place.

[13:48] Oh yes, you may have chose it. But listen, there is one who overrules. Because as the Bible declares to us, man plans his way, but God directs his course. We have a great God who directs each and every step.

He is the sovereign leading. And we see that he's so ordained that this decree would be issued. And it would be a decree of such nature that each would have to go back to his hometown. And we do know that Joseph was of the lineage of David.

Now Mary is of the lineage of David as well. In the Gospel of Matthew, you have Joseph's ancestry. In the Gospel of Luke, in the third chapter, you have Mary's ancestry.

Both of these are important. We don't have time really to get into it. He had to be of the lineage of David according to Joseph because Joseph dictated which hometown they would go to to have the census taken.

He had to be the lineage of David according to Mary because Joseph's lineage of David had within it a king named Jeconiah. Jeconiah in the Old Testament had a curse pronounced upon him that no seed of Jeconiah would ever sit upon the throne of Israel.

[14:56] And since no seed of Jeconiah would ever, he was the last king at the Babylonian captivity, by the way, and he was so wicked. It's Coniah or Jeconiah. Both names are in the Old Testament, same individual. God makes this curse upon Jeconiah that no seed of Jeconiah would ever rule.

We have a problem when we open up the Gospel of Matthew because we find that Jeconiah is in David's family tree. You say, well, according to David, Jesus has no right to the throne spiritually, but he has every right to the throne legally because Israel overlooked that curse and said, well, the legal right to the throne is through this seed.

Well, when we open up Luke and we see in the third chapter of Luke, this is why genealogy is important, by the way. Ever wonder why all those names are there? It's because when you open up the Gospel of Luke and you read the genealogy according to Mary, you find that Mary is also of the lineage of David, but she is not of Jeconiah.

As a matter of fact, she traces her lineage through this obscure son of David who's just mentioned one time in the Old Testament. His name is Nathan. Just one time it's mentioned. We're told that David, just when he had all these wives and these children, and he had this boy named Nathan, and we're like, why do we need to know he had a boy named Nathan?

Because so many years later, there would be a son that would come through a lineage whose mother was tied. Now all of a sudden, listen to this beautiful picture, right? Because God moved the leaders to issue a decree, he sovereignly so ordained that because David was legally the descendant of Joseph, Joseph had to go to Bethlehem, which meant he had a legal responsibility, but Christ has a spiritual right to the throne because he's not the seed of Joseph, he's the seed of Mary.

[16:30] And Mary does not trace her lineage through Jeconiah, but is of the family of David. See, God is sovereign. He overrules all. He knows exactly what he's doing, and he knows how to do it.

If he had been of the family of David just through Mary, that would have been enough to suffice because he has none of Joseph's blood in him, but that would not have been enough to get him to Bethlehem. We stand amazed at the sovereign leading.

God knows what he's doing. He knew what he was doing then, and he knows what he's doing now. We see, secondly, a simple appearing. A simple appearing. He who is eternal, whose goings forth have been from everlasting, who, according to Scripture, spoke it all into existence, that by him and through him and for him all things have been created, that he upholds the world by the power and the palm of his hands, that if he was to call his spirit back to himself, all of men would perish. He who has created it all, sustains it all, upholds it all, and it was created for him in those days came. There was no room for them in the end.

We shouldn't get bent out of shape about that. There were a lot of people who was wrapped in swaddling cloths and laid in the manger. What's more amazing to me is not where he laid his head. What's more amazing to me is that nobody noticed.

[17 : 52] The majority of men was unaware of what had just transpired, that the long-anticipated one, the long-prophesied one, the one that had been spoken of, had just come.

We see his simple appearing. And he comes in the most humblest of ways. It is not only amazing that he chose to humble himself and come to us, but he came to us in such a manner and in such a way, listen to this, my friend, that any may come to him.

Any other location, any other place, the shepherds would have never been welcomed. But the one place the shepherds are welcome is in a manger. See, he came in the lowliest of ways, and he came to dwell among us, but he came to dwell among us in such a manner and in such a way that any may be free to come to him.

The simplicity is full of majesty. Kings appear in courts, and kings appear on thrones, and kings appear in great halls, but not everybody's welcome there.

He came in such a way and in such a manner in the simplest of days and the simplest of times and the simplest of circumstances so that all may come. There are none. Listen, a king can go if he so desires, and a shepherd can go if he so desires.

[19 : 20] From the greatest to the least, all are welcome. This is something we see that's being resonated throughout the ministry of Christ over and over and over again. We see from the greatest to the least, all are welcome because this is the manner in which he has come.

The simple appearing, the most wonderful of events, the thing which changes the course of history, the thing which should change the course of our lives, happened in the simplest of ways.

Attended by the angels, sure, but unnoticed by multitudes of men. And he came so that all who did not notice him, all who did not understand him, that any of those who would be welcome to him.

We see the sovereign leading. We see the simple appearing. Third and finally, we see a supernatural drawing. We have already looked at the reality of the shepherds being a part of the announcement of heaven.

We have been amazed at the fact that the most public announcement which God declared, he declared it to a group of shepherds which nobody else would ever listen to. More people heard that in one setting than any other announcement.

[20 : 27] They were not considered fit to testify in the courts of the kingdom. They were not fit to testify because they were considered liars. They were considered people who were unworthy of even testimony.

But we realize that no matter what man thought about them after this announcement, they began to testify and began to declare to all who would hear. But we see this supernatural drawing.

Because all are welcome here and this is going to be a display, we've seen the supernatural drawing through the star. But I think that we may have missed it when we read this, that it says, the angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them and the glory of the Lord shone around them.

I want you just to think about this just for a moment. The angel of the Lord stood before them and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they came to announce there has been born for you a child who is Christ the Lord.

Now this is how I reconcile it in my mind. The one who told the angels to go and make this announcement is the baby who's laying in the manger.

[21 : 41] Because they are his angels. That's his glory. You say, wait a minute, pastor, that makes no sense. Newborn babies don't speak. You're right.

He wasn't newborn. He had just been recently manifested. Before stepping out of the courts of heaven, before taking on the flesh of mankind, his declaration to the angels was to go make this announcement.

They are the angel of the Lord. It is the glory of the Lord. He is Christ who is the Lord. Don't miss this.

You say, well, that is fully man wrapped in cloths lying in a manger. Right. But it's also fully God. He is fully man and fully God. These are his angels who can only do his beckoning, who can only declare what he has commanded them to say.

If you ever wanted a text to realize that no man comes lest he be drawn by the Father, that no man come lest he be drawn. Jesus says, you don't come on your own choosing.

[22 : 53] You come by a supernatural drawing. Listen, the Lord who is clothed in flesh is the same Lord who had sent the angels and said, tell them to come see me. And we see here this supernatural drawing that he is drawing them to come worship him.

He is welcoming them into his presence and he is drawing them that they may declare what they have seen. Friend, listen, even today as we gather together and we celebrate the birth of Christ, there is a supernatural drawing that compels our hearts and minds to want to behold the Christ. We know we're not looking for a baby laying in a manger any longer. We understand that. We're anticipating an advent of Christ who's coming in authority and power with a scepter to rule and righteousness.

We're anticipating another advent and we see that. But the only way we have this excitement and this anticipation and even this expectation is not just because the word says so but because God declares it in our own hearts and minds and he draws us to himself.

How magnificent it is. I mean, let's just be honest. The majority of those around us today are having a great time opening gifts and it's not bad to open gifts and to celebrate and rejoice.

[24 : 12] That's a wonderful thing. Some of us, our love language is giving and receiving of gifts and that's awesome and you can express it that way. But how much more to be divinely, supernaturally drawn to worship.

To understand that the greatest gift of mankind was the fact that God kept his word. The one that was spoken of in the mid-1400s and again repeated in the mid-700s B.C.

all of a sudden showed up and there is the advent of Christ that declares to us God keeps his word and he draws people to see it and to behold it and to stand amazed at it.

We rejoice in the fact that God interrupts history because if he had never interrupted history we would have just continued our downward spiral progressing the ways that we thought were best. And honestly what we think is best is never right. But God so chose on that day to interrupt history and to change it forever for each and every one of us.

[25 : 26] Let's pray. Lord we thank you so much for this time together. We thank you for our opportunity of looking at your word. But Lord we rejoice more in this season that you've given us to be reminded that you came to dwell among us to live a perfect life to die a perfect death to be raised on the third day so that we could look to you as our redeemer our sustainer and our savior.

Lord we thank you for keeping your word. We thank you for drawing men and women to yourself for your glory. Lord may our hearts and minds be turned to you in worship and adoration and we ask it all in Christ's name.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.