

Luke 2:1-20

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[0 : 00] is probably my favorite service every year. I'm excited every time I get the chance to preach. I'm excited every time I get the opportunity to stand up and to open up the Word of God with you.

But Christmas Eve night service has always been my favorite. I don't know if it's a multitude of reasons why I like the simplicity of it. I like this usually it's a smaller gathering of fellowship together. I like the fact some of you like the fact that we get out on time and that's okay.

And as I shared with someone else earlier by this time of the Christmas season if Carrie and I have not got it done it's not going to get done. So it just is what it is right. So this is a time of release. This is a time of just relaxing and stopping and I'm I'm always excited coming to this time. Take your Bibles go to the book of Luke. Luke chapter 2 that Christmas story we have a tradition in our family on Christmas morning. We read Luke chapter 2 verses 1 through 20 before we open any gifts.

Typically by this time of the year in the calendar year I would have already read it a couple of times in church service because we would have been making our way through a Christmas series. This year we're not doing a Christmas series on Sunday mornings. We are making our way through the book of Matthew. So I could not pass up the opportunity to look at Luke chapter 2 verses 1 through 20 with you as we look at the word of God. I know this is kind of different to do on our night service but in light of the season in light of the passage if you're physically able would you join with me as we stand together and we read the word of God found in Luke chapter 2 verses 1 through 20. Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. 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 end. In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. 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 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 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. So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph and the baby as he lay in the manger and when they had seen this they may 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 when the shepherds went back glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen just as had been told them. Luke chapter 2 verses 1 through 20 you may be seated.

It is always tempting to take a passage such as this which is so familiar to us and to not discount it but at times to overlook the wonder of it. I believe that some are right to say that this passage almost sounds better when it's read in children's voices than it does in adults voices. We tend not to be able to separate the Charlie Brown Christmas special the reading of Linus reading this to Charlie Brown and that Charlie Brown is what Christmas is all about and we tend to put those together but I want us to take a moment this evening and just look at the glory of Emmanuel. The glory of Emmanuel found for us in Luke 2 verses 1 through 20. Of course you know Emmanuel is one of the

names of Christ but it is also full of meaning that God with us and we see this recorded and this thing which all of scripture points to this thing which is highlighted over and over and over again in the Old Testament and everything is working towards this event. It is event so pivotal in history that all of history changes around this.

[5 : 02] Everything revolves around this because without his coming there could not be his dying. Also one of the highlights of this service is the reality that we get to recognize his coming and also celebrate his dying and soon returning because at the close of the service we will remember his death in light of his birth. But we know that this is the event that really is spoken of over and over and over.

So many prophecies in Old Testament which point to this one event which seems to take place in such simplicity but with such wonder and with such glory. The first thing we notice about the glory of Emmanuel is that it is an interruption of history. It is an interruption of history. Luke the physician is concerned about details as we typically would want physicians and doctors to be. Luke is writing with special care and special attention to the details. If you read the gospel of Luke you will notice that Luke highlights things that the other gospel writers don't highlight such as which hand was withered in the man in the synagogue when Jesus cured the man with the harmed hand or which way they went.

Luke gave a lot of details. Luke gave a lot of details and Luke writes here now in those days now in those days some 2,000 plus years removed from the event we tend to forget these things happened at a very particular time in history. It is an historical event that God chose to interrupt history in order that he may effect man's eternity and to me that is glorious. He who is above history that is who transcends history who does not see things in the past and things in the present or things in the future God who sees things all at one time chose to come in those days because man dwells in history so God chose to interrupt history so that he could affect and influence all of our eternity He chose a particular time He chose a particular place and He chose it chose it with great intentionality the Bible tells us in the fullness of time Christ came at the right time God moved historically we don't have time to go through all of the implications of this but we stand amazed at the reality of when God chose to come because just a few years in light of man's activity prior to this or a few years in light of man's activity after this it would not have had the impact but God chose to interrupt history at the right time it is an interruption of history so that man cannot be confined to history because Ecclesiastes tells us God has said eternity in the heart of all men yet the reality is that we have a hard time seeing beyond our own historical setting we don't know what tomorrow brings we have a hard enough time reconciling what happened yesterday but yet God interrupted our history so that he could greatly impact our eternity and for that we rejoice when we come together and we recognize the Christmas event did it happen on December 25th?

probably not can I tell you exactly when it happened? no but I can tell you that there was a historical date in which God determined to interrupt the history of man and change it for all time and all eternity and for that we stand in wonder that God chose in those days while Quirinius was governor many people, many scholars, historical scholars, biblical scholars have such a hard time wrapping their mind around this event they try to reconcile it with world history and they try to reconcile it with things and more than likely this was around 4 BC not 0 AD or 1 AD because they're trying to reconcile it with history but we don't need to have all the specificities all we need to realize is that God chose to interrupt history so that he can meet us where we live we don't live beyond it we live in a particular time and in those days God chose to do something and it's amazing isn't it that what he did in those days still impacts us today because it transcends time so we see the interruption of history we see in this glorious event the initiative of God these things from beginning to end are initiated by God man could not orchestrate and plan these things so perfectly we understand when we read the gospel accounts of how the angel appeared to Mary and later the angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and we understand Mary being engaged to Joseph and then we come to the historical account and we read that Joseph also went to Bethlehem the city of David because he was of that family that God did not haphazardly choose Joseph

[10 : 49] God did not haphazardly choose Mary not only did he choose them because they had the right lineage he also chose them because they were from the right city more specific Joseph was from the right city because see Micah 5 2 says but you oh Bethlehem out of you shall come the Savior Bethlehem is a city of very little significance other than being the house and the home of David in the Old Testament but there is this prophecy in Micah 5 2 that said from Bethlehem would

come forth a Savior and God's purpose and plans he chose a man from the city of Bethlehem and a decree issued in those days by Quirinius that everyone would have to return home and so Joseph was forced to go back to Bethlehem and it says and while they were there the days were completed for her to give birth think about this just for a moment to go take your census and to go back home to Nazareth yet plans were changed completely because it was at the perfect timing it was at the perfect place and it was in the perfect setting from beginning to end the whole event is the initiative of God man could not have written it better man could not have planned it better man could not have purposed it better from beginning to end it's the initiative of God it's moving intentional moving with force and moving with power and moving with glory and we stand in awe of that because we don't read a series of coincidental events but rather we read an account of intentional initiative in which God did what he said he was going to do and he did it at the right time with the right people at the right place in the right setting and we stand amazed because if it had happened any other way then the prophecies of the Old Testament would not have been brought forth the prophecies of the Old Testament would have been unfulfilled and Christ could not have been who he declares to be so we see the initiative of God we also read in this account the glorious invitation to worship and there were some shepherds nearby staying out in the field there were some shepherds nearby staying out in the field again is this coincidental no

Jesus was laid in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn but a manger is a great place to be met by some shepherds a manger is a great place of equal accessibility to all because if you are from the highest to the lowest you can come to the manger shepherds would have never been welcomed into the inn they never would have been welcomed into an individual's house because most inns were individuals' homes this is where we get the hospitality mentality that runs throughout scripture it was welcoming individuals into your home it's not like they were trying to stay at a country inn in suites or a micro hotel even it was individuals' homes and people that were not welcomed in the homes were shepherds because shepherds stunk shepherds were untrustworthy and shepherds were counted as unclean I know that's not very flattering but that's the reality but they were very very welcome around a manger and there were some shepherds out in the field and the angel of the Lord appeared to them no one thing we know about angels is that angels can only do that which they have been commissioned to do they do not have the right to choose and to pick and to determine what it is they do they can only do that which they have been told to do this is an angel of the

Lord who has come to declare the coming of the Lord in my mind I always kind of reconcile it this way shortly before Jesus Christ chose to come down and take on the form of flesh he told some of his angels I'm about to go and as soon as I come I want you to go announce my arrival because they are his angels they are his servants they do his beckoning he that is the baby wrapped in swaddling cloths lying in the manger is also the one who has issued the decree for his angels to go stand before the shepherds and to extend the invitation here again you see the initiative the shepherds would have never chosen the shepherds would have never thought they had the opportunity but yet here's this invitation because what does it say there has been born for you in the city of David a savior who is Christ the Lord the invitation does not say there has been born for others there has been born for some the invitation is extended to the outcasts of society and says there has been born for you and they responded to the invitation how let us go see this thing which the

Lord has revealed to us here is the invitation to worship the savior has come and he has come for you and he has come in a place where you can approach him he has come in a place that he is accessible to you and he has come in a place where you will be welcome so come and worship what a glorious thing it is to see that this invitation to worship is an invitation that is extended to all it is an invitation we read if we were to continue reading chapter 2 we would have read of Anna Anna who had lived to the age of 84 after the death of her husband and she was daily in the temple she was a prophetess right Anna the prophetess who is there and she's praying and she sees this child eight days old coming in for his circumcision and she worships this child because she knows who it is or we would read of Simeon Simeon the man who says that the Holy Spirit told him that he would not die until he had seen the hope and consolation of Israel who is the savior and he went that day being led by the spirit on the very day that the parents brought Jesus in for his circumcision that is on the eighth day he went to the temple and on the eighth day he saw this child and he worshipped him so now we have shepherds a prophetess and a righteous

old man all with an extended invitation of come and worship him from the feeding trough to the temple floor the invitation was extended and we stand in wonder at the glory of God with us of Emmanuel this invitation to worship and to come and to adore because God longs that man would hear that invitation God does not have a God complex where he needs to be worshiped [18:12] God realizes we have a worship complex where we need to worship and he extends that invitation to us let me show you that which is worthy of your worship the Lord allows us to tarry we will be in Matthew chapter 6 this Sunday morning or this coming Sunday morning and we will be looking at that ambitious life of the kingdom and we'll be looking at what most people worship contrast it with what God has called us to worship we get into that passage seek ye first the kingdom of heaven and all his righteousness and all these things will be added unto you what a glorious thing it is when God extends an invitation and fourth and finally we not only see the interruption of history the initiative of God the invitation to worship number four we see the individual response because while this heavenly host of angels appeared and extended a broad invitation and the spirit moves in the life of Anna and Simeon and extends this broad invitation the way the invitation is received and the action based upon that invitation is up to the individual no one can compel no one can move each individual does differently and we read this at the end of this section of verses where each individual we see does something different because the shepherds it says made known the statement that had been told them about his child so the shepherds went professing the multitudes that is the crowd stood in wonder they wondered at the things being told them by the shepherds so the shepherds made known the people wondered but Mary pondered these things in her hearts and held on to them deeply what we understand is that each individual responds differently to that invitation that was given and it is an individual response it is that glorious aspect of

Emmanuel it is God with us corporately yes but individually and it is the individual responsibility to respond and to react to that now does God know how we're going to do it yes absolutely but God does not remove the individuality of the person when he comes and dwells among him shepherds were talking though no one even in a court of law they would not have been considered reputable witnesses their testimony in a court of law was not accepted because everybody said all shepherds do is lie that's just what happened in the times of Christ but yet they did not keep that image they did not let that image keep them from telling everyone and yet the people who may never have ever paid attention to what shepherds said now stand in wonder of everything they are hearing and Mary is pondering it in her heart we see individual responses that vary from person to person but the reality is

Emmanuel has come to all and we celebrate that this Christmas season the glory of Emmanuel we are going to pray we are going to sing I told you we would probably get out early right we are going to sing one more hymn and then we are going to see the other side of this as we take the Lord's supper together so let's pray Lord I thank you so much thank you for the glory of Christmas we thank you for the wonder of it all the things that we cannot understand and the things that we cannot wrap our mind around Lord more importantly we thank you for coming to us coming that you may extend that invitation that we may worship you and celebrate you and rejoice in you and may each one of us individually apply it to our lives on a daily basis and we ask it all in Christ's name amen it's going to be hymn number 103 hymn number 103 you're going to stand with me as we sing it together away in a manger no crib for a bed the little

Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head! stars in the sky looked down where he lay the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay the cattle so so so so!

so may be a waste. But let the Lord Jesus no crying be made.

[23:46] Our lovely Lord Jesus look down from the sky and stay behind cradle till morning is low.

Be near me, Lord Jesus I ask thee to stay close by me forever and love me I pray as all the new children in thy tender care and fill us for heaven to live with thee there.

Amen. You may be seated, guys. Before we take communion together, I want to read a section or a series of scripture to you.

This is not something that I do very often. Though when I first started pastoring, I was kind of known as the pastor who said you better have a lot of bookmarks because I would read several different passages.

And I think in light of where we're at this evening, I would like us to see several from the book of Isaiah. Isaiah is a book of great strength and great power, especially in reference to the coming of

Christ.

[25 : 16] I think Isaiah gives us such a full picture of that Savior that has come. The very familiar verse to Isaiah 7, 14 says this, Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign.

Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call his name Emmanuel. In Isaiah 9, verses 6 and 7, we read of this child.

For it says, For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us, and the government will rest on his shoulders, and his name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

There will be no end to the increase of his government or of peace, and on the throne of David and over his kingdom to establish it and uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore.

The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this. For many, that is the Savior they were looking for, this child who would come and sit upon the throne of David and reign, and the government would rest upon his shoulders, this Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

[26 : 30] Yet Isaiah takes a sharp turn near the end of it. And in Isaiah 53, verses 10 through 12, it says, of this same child, but the Lord was pleased to crush him, putting him to grief.

If he would render himself as a guilt offering, he will see his offspring. He will prolong his days, and the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in his hand.

And as a result of the anguish of his soul, he will see it and be satisfied. By his knowledge, the righteous one, my servant, would justify the many as he will bear their iniquities.

Therefore, I will allot him a portion with the great and will divide the booty with the strong because he poured out himself to death and was numbered with transgressors.

Yet he himself bore the sin of many and interceded for the transgressor. One thing we notice there, it says that he would give himself as a guilt offering.

[27 : 40] You remember, we looked at this before we went into the book of Matthew. Guilt offering means a 120% repayment for that which was due. And you also notice, it says, he did not bear your sins with an S.

He did not bear the bad things we do. He bore our sin, singular, that is the nature we are. He paid 120% of what was due for who we are.

And Paul writes, last one, we'll take it together. In 1 Corinthians chapter 11, you know, we are never commanded in scripture to do anything in remembrance of his coming.

That's not an ordinance of the church. Though we celebrate his coming, what we are told is to remember his death, burial, and resurrection as a reminder of his second coming.

When the government will rest upon his shoulders. So Paul writes to the church at Corinth in 1 Corinthians chapter 11, starting in verse 23, for I received from the Lord.

[28 : 53] Just think about that. We know that Christ initiated this among his disciples, but Paul says, I received this from the Lord too. In those years in the Arabian wilderness when Christ himself was teaching, for I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which he was betrayed took bread.

He took bread. And when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

He says in verse 25, in the same way, he took the cup also after supper saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood.

Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me. This last declaration and then we'll be through.

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. This is something we get to do this side of eternity.

[30 : 25] There'll be no taking of the Lord's supper together in glory. This is something we declare until he comes and then we sit down with him at that great marriage supper of the Lamb.

So as we celebrate his coming and we rejoice in this season, may we also be mindful of his death. May we also be mindful of his soon reappearing not as a child wrapped in cloths lying in a manger but as a king with a crown riding on the back of a white horse as the righteous king of kings and lord of lords that he is.

Let me pray with you and then we will be dismissed. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you. We thank you for the opportunity of worship. We thank you for the opportunity of celebration.

we thank you for the season which you have given us. But lord, more than that, we thank you for the death that you died for each and every one of us. Lord, thank you for the opportunity to proclaim your death until you come again.

Because lord, may we end and may we declare as your word ends, come lord Jesus, come. May that be the hope of Christmas. Not that you came at one time in history, but that you are coming again to affect all of history.

[31 : 51] Lord, we love you and we praise you and we worship you. And we ask it all in Christ's name. Amen. From my family to yours, I wish each and every one of you a very merry Christmas and I hope that you have a great day tomorrow and I hope to see you Sunday morning.

We are through. Thank you guys. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[36 : 16] Thank you. Thank you.