

Luke 2:1-20

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Date: 23 December 2018

[0 : 00] So if you're physically able and desire to do so, I ask if you'll join me as we stand together and we read the Word of God, Luke 2, verses 1 through 20. Luke 2, verses 1 through 20.

I preach from the New American Standard Bible. Many of you have since did the same thing so that you can get together with me, but I will go ahead and forewarn you, this set of scriptures is kind of etched in my mind in the King James.

So if I don't read it exactly and I kind of start reverting even while reading it, I'm sorry. So you're like, well, he messed up on his translation. Which translation is he from? I try to be very intentional and read it right, but it kind of gets etched in there.

Luke 2, verses 1 through 20 says this. 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.

[1 : 13] 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 which has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.

[2 : 18] 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 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 they had heard and seen, just as has been told them.

Let's pray. Lord, we are so thankful for this time of year. God, we rejoice in the Christmas season. Lord, we are thankful that we have an opportunity to come together to worship, to sing your praises, to look at your word.

But I pray, O Lord, that this scripture will come over us with fresh wonder and fresh spirit. I pray, O Lord, we would be reminded and renewed and rejoiced and rejuvenated in the truthfulness of the season.

God, have your way, and we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated. Isn't it amazing how some things can forever be etched in your mind and some things can always be changed based on something you heard?

[3 : 33] I don't know if many of you have ever heard the Christian comedian Tim Hawkins. Tim Hawkins does some great comedy. But I caution you, if you go watch Tim Hawkins' videos and you

see his parody on some songs, you'll never be able to listen to I Can Only Imagine the Same because his song, I Can Only Eat Margarine, kind of runs in your mind over and over again.

There's a number of things that he has done. And I will never be able to read this scripture without seeing a little girl say, what part of Fear Not did you not understand?

Thanks to the Christmas play we watched last night. And it was so, not last night, last week. It was so fitting to see that and to see the beauty of it displayed through our children and to see the beauty of the message come through.

But I pray that as always, that we would take time to be amazed at it as well. This morning, I want you to see the wonder of Christmas.

I want you to be reminded and to, again, to reinforce you of the wonder of Christmas. We really do have a lot to celebrate. We really do have a lot to rejoice in.

[4 : 41] This passage is so rich, and it's so rich when you take it into context. And this is normally why I stop, and I preach for a number of weeks, four to six weeks on this whole series.

But I didn't feel led to do it this year. And the Lord allowed me to stay in the book of Romans. But I challenge you over the next few days to study not only Luke 2, but also Luke 1 and Matthew 1.

And go on through the remainder of Luke 2 and see how God broke into the silence of the world through the angel appearing to Zechariah in the temple.

And to see how the angel came to Mary with the announcement. And to see how the angel appeared to Joseph with the reassurance. And see how God used the rulers of the world to bring about the events in history.

And to see how when they brought the baby when he was eight days old into the temple. And Simeon comes up and gives this prophecy that he will bear the wounds of the many and bring sorrow to his mother Mary.

[5 : 41] No mention of Joseph, by the way. That's important because by the time he gets to the cross, Joseph isn't there. We don't know what happens to him. But we understand this. And then we see Anna, who had been in the temple for all these years, coming up and rejoicing.

And over and over again, we see the amazement of the Christmas season as it is really the birth of the Gospel. But I pray that just looking at these 20 verses, you see the wonder of Christmas.

Maybe it is your custom or tradition, as it is our family, that each year you read this account, each year you read it on Christmas morning as a reminder. If not, maybe you can start doing that.

One of the first things we do on Christmas morning, we get up. The first thing Carrie and I do is we sit still and we drink our coffee and we read our Bibles and we try to be really quiet and not wake any kids up, right?

I'm all about letting them get up whenever they want to get up on that day. And before we get into opening any gifts, we read the story of the greatest gift since. But I pray that this morning we will be captivated by the wonder.

[6 : 49] Just three things I want you to see from this set of scriptures. Number one, I want you to see the unlikely event itself. The unlikely event. It says, and now Luke is written by the physician Luke, a man of great detail, a man of great accuracy.

You remember in the introduction to Luke, as he also pens it, in the introduction to the book of Acts, he wrote Luke and Acts, two letters, really two parts. He had such an account, he wanted to write.

Luke was investigating these matters and was coming to such great detail. He sent this man, Theophilus, the first part, which we have as the book of Luke. And then he continued writing and researching and then sent Theophilus, the second part, which we have as the book of Acts.

In the book of Luke, it starts to the most excellent Theophilus. And he has carefully researched and carefully investigated and carefully studied these events that had come to pass.

And he is writing with complete accuracy. It is always good to understand that because you want to take it in its context. Luke is a Gentile writer. He is non-Jewish, okay?

[7 : 56] And he is writing from a man of perspective of science. He is the traveling physician who went with Paul and he's researching these things. He is a great historian.

But he writes here, Now in those days, now in those days, we're looking at the unlikely events. In those days, it would be what Paul would call in the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son.

Those days being the fullness of time at the right time, at the right place, at the right time in history, with the right structure, it is just absolutely wonderful to look and see that Christ was born at the absolute perfect time to reach the world with the gospel.

And it is amazing how God uses certain things as the Roman Empire and the Pax Romana and the road systems, all roads lead to Rome, and how everything was in place at this time so that in those days, God could move.

We start looking at the unlikely event, realizing that God moved at a perfect time, and God moved at a perfect day. It is amazing that this birth changes the way we tell time and days and dates through all of history.

[9 : 19] It is very unlikely that any child will ever be born that will completely alter the course of mankind more than this child, more than that event.

It says, 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 when, this is the first census that was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.

It is amazing to me that this unlikely event in the fullness of time happens when God moved in a world empire. That God used the world forces, listen to this, God used the world forces to work the work of heaven.

Such an unlikely event that God would so move Caesar Augustus to issue a decree while Quirinius was governor of Syria so that everybody would go back to their birthplace, so that everybody would travel.

And see, we lose this because we are so familiar with it that Joseph being of Nazareth and Mary being of Nazareth kind of the rough place. I kind of was joking with Carrie yesterday a little bit about certain things and then she kind of got on to me and said I was stepping kind of outside of my biblical realm.

[10 : 38] I said I kind of think we were talking about some things she was making and I said you could have put Mary's head with a little bit of tilt to it. We joke with Carrie. She went to that school there in town. We don't talk about it very much.

They're blue and gold, you know. We call it the shovel tilt. Kind of got a little attitude with those big schools and I said you know Mary was from Nazareth not the best part in town. Nobody liked the people from Nazareth. I said I can see Mary holding baby Jesus going now what?

Tell me I wasn't pregnant. Now you're going to say something. You know I got the king of kings and the Lord of lords right here. I said she was from Nazareth. She was probably a little rough. Joseph was from Nazareth. Problem is the Messiah couldn't be born in Nazareth.

Messiah had to come out of Bethlehem. But God used the forces of the world to issue decree to take them back to Bethlehem so that they could be born.

He could be born in Bethlehem but also come forth from Nazareth because that by the way is a prophecy that he would be from an area that was despised and rejected that he would be from an area that lived in darkness and that area would be Nazareth.

[11 : 40] A little bitty old dot on the map completely forgotten about in history other than this unlikely event. We see God using the world's forces to bring about the work of heaven so that Jesus could be born exactly in the place where he was supposed to be and we look at this unlikely event that the decree went out.

Now, there has been much labor and much work on both sides of the coin in order to reaffirm or to disprove the reality of this census. There are scholars who have sought to say that Quirinius and I agree with him Quirinius must have had two different rules because we have a date of a later rule that would be later than the birth of Christ and more than likely there was also a first rule which would have been during this time of the birth of Christ and that is exactly possible or very believable because that happened quite often in the Roman Empire and then there are others who say but there are no historical records of this census though we do know from Roman history that they would often issue censuses and people would have to travel back to their hometown but what I want you to see is that we try to investigate the small matters while looking over the most unlikely event of all that he came.

I wrote by a church sign this week not going to tell you which sign it was and if you've seen it that's fine but the church sign read this way that God walked down the stairs of heaven with a baby in his arms with all due respect to that church that's not absolutely true.

The wonder of Christmas is that God came down the steps of heaven as a baby because see every baby is knit together and fashioned in the womb every baby is put there by God Almighty and if Jesus is just a baby from the arms of God and he's just like every other baby the wonder of Christmas is that when God came down the stairs of heaven he was the baby he didn't carry a baby

he didn't bring a baby he is the baby the wonder of Christmas is this unlikely event not that God just used the world forces not that it was at the right time not that it was at the right place not that it was the right people not that all these things were involved the wonder of it all is that God took on flesh and became Emmanuel that God the creator came to his creation he came to his own as John would write and his own received him not the wonder of Christmas is he came to us the most unlikely event of all is not that there was a woman who had to travel who came to a place whose baby was born who was born in a cave and was laid in a manger on my bus

I have a girl that rides my bus and I remember I was talking to her a couple years ago and she had just moved to the school district and I was asking her where she was from she said I'm from Texas I said that's pretty cool we had just been there I said I've been to Texas she said yeah I was born on Galveston Beach I said yeah I've been to Galveston Beach I said that's a pretty cool area she said no you don't get it I was born on Galveston Beach I said that's pretty unique she said yeah my mom went to labor we were sitting there at the beach and I was born on the beach that's a beach mom right there's all kinds of crazy stories like that there's all kinds of events that go throughout history but it isn't that Mary had a baby and laid him in the trough even though we'll get to that in just a minute it's not that he was in this cave or this manger scene the wonder of is that God came that's the wonder of it the most unlikely event is that God came to us how he chose to come that's amazing too but we must first stand in awe of the fact that he did come what a joy it is to celebrate the unlikely event number two

[15:37] I want you not only to notice the unlikely event I want you to look at the unbelievable announcement we're looking at the wonder of Christmas we move on it says in verse six and 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 here it is here's this unbelievable announcement in the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping their watch over their flock by night we've talked about it that region would have been just about two miles outside of Jerusalem Bethlehem is two miles outside of Jerusalem that region would have been the shepherds who were watching the sheep that would have been offered as a sacrificial lambs in the temple it's a great picture where you see those who were watching over the sacrificial lambs that would be offered in the temple were the first ones to have announced to them of the lamb that was sacrificed before the foundation of the world who is Jesus Christ what a beautiful picture it is here but in the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping their 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 we begin this unbelievable announcement with the shepherds one of the great proofs of the accuracy of the gospel is this and I really don't mean any belittling towards anyone we have to take it in a Jewish setting some people claim that the Bible is just made up stories of individuals that they created the gospel account to use it as a crutch or to use it as something to believe him many people believe that Jesus actually was born he had a mom named Mary he had a dad named Joseph he was a carpenter son he was born in Bethlehem he lived in Nazareth he was a pretty good teacher he was a great moral example to follow and then he died he died on a Roman cross and they laid him in a tomb and it's from there that they deviate from us because they believed that he was such a good guy he had so devoted of followers that they stole his body away and they began to invent the stories that we have as the gospel they began to put these stories together and some people will tell you that this is nothing at all what

Jesus had in mind but if we put ourselves in the Jewish setting if we put ourselves into the Jewish mindset this is what makes this so unbelievable the gospel begins with an announcement to shepherds and it ends with a discovery by women it begins with some shepherds out in the field hearing about the birth of the Savior and it ends with some women going to the tomb and seeing the angel declaring the resurrection of the Savior now again no offense intended there were two groups of people that the Jews in the times of the Bible writing did not associate with there were two groups of people whose testimony was not allowed in the court rooms there were two groups of people who nobody would include in a man made story shepherds and women neither a shepherd nor a lady could testify in court sorry ladies it just wasn't allowed shepherds were seen as pathological liars they were seen as people who could not be trusted and they were seen as people who were filthy and outcasts in society it's amazing isn't it these were also the people who kept charge of the

sheep that would repay the sacrifice for the sins of those judging them ladies were seen as property and they were seen as unbelievable they were seen as not fit to offer good testimony and yet people say that men in those days made it up if the men were making it up it would not be shepherds who got the announcements it would be probably the rabbis or the teachers or the great thinkers of the day it would not have been the ladies who found the tomb empty it would have been definitely been

Peter or John or James it would have been somebody who would have been man enough not to be up in an upper room trembling and scared they would have went to the tomb and found the announcement but that's not how the gospel goes but we stand in wonder of Christmas and the fact that those who the world avoided God pursued the world at this time sought to avoid the shepherds they were seen as outcasts and yet the angel of the Lord went to them the angel of the Lord stood before them the glory of the Lord shone on them isn't it unbelievable the reason I find such great comfort in that is because I also understand that if most people knew me as I really was or as I really am if most people know us as God knows us we too would be outcast we too would be rejected we too would be cast aside we too would be one nobody else wanted anything to do with and yet

God sought us God seeks us out just as he sought out the shepherds they did not come to him he went to them and that is such a beautiful picture we see of grace and mercy all throughout scripture it is God searching out the outcast it is God coming to those who could never come to him see a shepherd wasn't allowed onto the temple square he was unclean he couldn't come into the temple he couldn't come to worship God he couldn't bask in the glory of God he couldn't stand in the holy of holies but God came to them and allowed the glory of the Lord to shine around them and the angel comes to them and says do not be afraid for I bring you good news which will be for all people here is the unbelievable announcement it is an announcement for all people not just for the few it is an announcement for all people and to show that the gospel has truth for all people

[21 : 54] God starts the gospel at the most unlikely of people and that is the shepherds for today in the city of David there is born for you a savior who is Christ the Lord put yourself there on that first Christmas morning realizing that nobody wants anything to do with you nobody wants anything to associate with you you are an outcast of outcasts and all of a sudden the glory of heaven shines around you and you are told there's a savior for you three names for Jesus that are used here savior that is Messiah the long awaited one Christ who is the one who is prophesied all throughout the Old Testament the coming one and Lord the name of God Savior who is Christ the Lord and the shepherds here that's for me my friend when Jesus seeks you out and when God pursues you it is the very same thing we have when God whispers into our heart or into our mind and he comes to us when we're feeling like the outcasts of heaven realizing that we have fallen short sure we have sinned and fallen!

short! as unbelievable to me as it must have been for the shepherds and we pray that at the Christmas season that the truthfulness of that just resonates within us friend you know what's so great that on Christmas there's a Savior for each of us who is Christ the Lord no matter what the world says about us no matter who doesn't want anything to do with!

no matter how much it is for all people God didn't send an exclusive gift God didn't send something that was reserved for someone else each of us have gifts either under our tree or in our houses or something that is reserved someone it is picked out special for someone we had someone in mind and we have this gift and it's there and we're going to give it to that individual we won't be given it to everyone but the wonder of Christmas is that we were all on God's mind when the gift was given of all people of all time and all places and he gave it so that all everyone could come what an unbelievable announcement number three and finally I want you to see the undeniable testimony I love how scripture shows us these truths and I love how it's just like God I think it was Carrie this morning in the young adult

Sunday school class how she reminded us that part of the testimony is just testifying to what God has done in her own life and she says you know the Bible says test me and try me and see if these things are true and I love this God never gives an announcement without giving you a testimony that you can prove the reality of it right because this angel is here and he's standing here and he's speaking to these shepherds and he gives this announcement he says you will find a baby this will be a sign to you you will find a baby wrapped in cloths lying in a manger now a baby wrapped in cloths is not that hard to find they would have babies!

born wrap them real tight and bind them up and some of you ladies know how to do that I don't know mine just kind of look like the blankets laying on when I hold a baby but they wrap them up real tight and they would lay him down somewhere but the announcement comes with this here's a sign I find him laying in a manger most unlikely of places you won't be able to deny the reality of what I just told you because I'm giving you something to go see it's almost like when Elijah is on Mount Carmel and he gives the prophets of Baal their choice of bull he lets the prophets of Baal go first and they call down because Elijah said this will be a sign the God who answers by fire is God right let's let God testify to himself let's let God give us an undeniable testimony and you know the story the prophets of Baal do all these things and their God doesn't hear nothing happens because he's a false God Elijah comes up and he prays for probably like 25 seconds and God sends fire down from heaven and it consumes the bull the altar and all the water and it licks up all the stones and everything and everybody goes you know what

[26 : 17] I guess Elijah is God is God why because it's undeniable it just happens so the angel here kind of does the same thing with the shepherds I know what I'm telling you doesn't seem real I'm telling you that there is a Savior that has been born for you and it's been born for all people and I know right now it's so much we hear it we're so familiar with it but the shepherds never heard anything like this they've never heard this news and they're saying I can't believe this he says okay then go find this baby and you're going to find him laying in a feed trough in a manger okay so the angels there and other angels come and they sing glory to God and the peace on earth to men with whom God is well pleased and all these things are raining about him and then the glory departs and the angels go okay the angels are gone the shepherds are sitting there and the shepherds said you know what he told us that if these things were true we'd be able to find the evidence for the testimony so let's go see let's go see so it says straight way they made their way to Bethlehem and they found

Mary and they found Joseph and then they found the baby where'd they find him lying in a manger wow it says and they left there proclaiming all the things that had been told them about this child and all those who heard wondered at it if I had time we can continue through the book of Luke and you can see how Simeon came to the temple and just a couple verses over it says that Simeon had lived a long life and that Simeon was moved by the Spirit that the Holy Spirit moved Simeon that day and told him that he would not die until he saw the Lord's Messiah and he is walking through this temple this is a huge temple square and there are people everywhere and there are people I'm sure there are more people coming in with babies than just Mary and Joseph and people are always performing their legal right by law and all of a sudden Simeon goes there he is now I can die in peace there's the proof that what God told me is true Anna had been in the temple for 80 years and she had been there praying and she is there he is there is the proof of what God had been telling me friend listen to me it is the undeniable testimony because God says it is real and I'll prove it the beauty of Christmas is that when God extends a promise he also gives you the freedom to check and see the freedom to investigate the matter we encounter people today who says I just can't believe that God could love me that way I don't know if God could forgive me I don't know if God could redeem me I don't know if God could forgive everything I do and we have to be just like the angels were and say go and see why don't you try him out why don't you investigate the matter this is amazing I've never met anyone who has thoroughly and accurately searched out the evidence of

God's testimony and came away unbelieving those that I meet and those that I encounter who really sought it out and were honest with themselves always had to agree with the shepherds and say you know what what he told us is true and now I'm going to tell everyone what he told me the wonder of Christmas is that this is an unlikely event God came to us with an unbelievable announcement he came to us for us and it is undeniable testimony it is absolutely true I pray that your next two days would be just a reminder of the glory of God's invasion of your life not just him coming being born of a virgin laid in a laid in a borrowed cradle so that later he could be laid in a borrowed tomb but that he came into your life and he interrupted your life that you're trusting him as your Lord and Savior and that the glory of Christmas resonates each and every day throughout your life let's pray

God I thank you so much thank you for this season I thank you for this time of year I pray that we would stand in the wonder of the Savior God that you came to us when we could not come to you and Lord you came in such a way that it would be available to all I thank you for the account that

Luke offers us Lord I pray that the reality of that would resonate within each one of us I pray that we would know you not as a baby in a manger but Lord as a King of Kings and Lord of Lords reigning in our life I pray that as we go throughout the Christmas season we would share the hope and joy we have in Christ with all those we come into contact with and I ask it all in Jesus name Amen Amen Amen

[32 : 13] Amen Amen