

## Born...for You!

Christmas Eve, December 24, 2024

King of Glory Lutheran Church

Pastor Ruth Ann Loughry

Luke 2:1-20

<sup>1</sup> In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup> This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup> All went to their own towns to be registered. <sup>4</sup> Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. <sup>5</sup> He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. <sup>7</sup> And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

<sup>8</sup> In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: <sup>11</sup> to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” <sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup> “Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

<sup>15</sup> When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” <sup>16</sup> So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; <sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. <sup>19</sup> But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

*God came from heaven to take on our human form to show us just how much God loves us. Notice it's not just that Jesus is born, but the angels say, “Jesus is born for you.” And it's not just “good news,” in general, but it's “good news of great joy for you and all people.” Rev. Dr. David Lose<sup>i</sup>*

In the days when there still school Christmas concerts, young seven-year-old Linda Raybern had been practicing the carols. When the family gathered the week prior, Linda was asked to sing a carol for the relatives. She sang out confidently and sweetly, **‘Hark! Old Harold’s angel sings, glory to the newborn King. Peace on earth so mercy smiles, ‘cause God and reptiles reconciled...’**

Needless to say, the aunts and uncles began laughing boisterously. Young Linda had no idea why, burst into tears and ran up to her room. The most straitlaced aunt of all soon came in, taking the child in her arms with loving words. ‘Everyone was laughing because of the wonderful new words (you) I had sung. Even though everyone else had learned it a different way, (yours) mine was so much better.’

As they descended the stairs the whole extended family began singing Hark the Herald with young Linda’s new words. “I felt more loved than I ever had in my life.”<sup>ii</sup> **To turn a child’s honest mistake into a family concert...that’s real love. That’s God’s kind of Love.**

The first few cries of the baby are heard. Mary relaxes back into the hay holding baby Jesus, and Joseph wipes her forehead with a rag. Their eyes lock onto one another. “How can it be? How could they have been chosen to bring God’s son into the world?” The love they feel in that moment was as big as the starry sky. It could have burst the whole universe open. Well...in fact, that is just what happened.

Unknown to Mary and Joseph, shepherds had heard the news from angels in the sky singing and rejoicing! One angel told them the incredible news! “I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: <sup>11</sup> **to you** is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a **sign for you**: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.”

The angel was very specific. The sign to watch for, was the child lying in a manger. When the shepherds arrived and told Mary and Joseph the story, it only confirmed what they had held as their secret up until now.<sup>iii</sup> This was the Savior. God born on earth, in human form, with love so expansive as to include every person; giving them honor and dignity.

It’s all right there in the Bible text. By the world’s standards, these aren’t the obvious choices for the Savior’s arrival. An unwed pregnant teenager. Lowly shepherds. The wise men would be astrologers of another religion. But God chose

these folks because they are ordinary like us, demonstrating this Savior would be God for all people. People like you and me. People who long to be loved.

We know about love, don't we? Many of you have stood in that hospital room hearing the first cries of your own babies. Or you've stood at an altar sharing vows and rings to love, no matter what. Or your friends now make up your 'family' and you love them as such. I'm guessing that we've purchased Christmas gifts for at least one person simply because we love them.

God loved...from the very beginning. God set in motion this incredible universe, because God wanted to be in relationship with God's people and all of creation. Yet humans tend to think their own ways will always work best. They wandered away from God. All the Laws God gave didn't help. Prophets who yelled, cajoled and pressured didn't help. So, God changed tactics.

**God chose to come to earth, in human form, so each person would know they were loved.** "This child is born for you! This will be the sign, for you!" the angel said. There Jesus is, God with skin on, that we might know the intimate, unconditional love of God.

Perhaps tonight you've slid into your chair exhausted from cooking, cleaning, shopping, and wrapping. God knows you. God loves you. Jesus is born for you.

Maybe you slid into your chair exhausted by trying to keep your family from falling apart, worried about the medical bills, let alone buying special gifts, and praying for that one child that refuses to come home for Christmas. God knows you. God loves you. Jesus is born for you.

Or you came by yourself tonight, or are watching at home alone. You might be thinking Christmas is all about families and you're feeling the pain of isolation...trust this! God knows you. God loves you. Jesus is born for you.

I don't know about you. For so much of my life, I often heard this message that 'God loves me' or was 'born for me,' as 'well, they're really talking about the person sitting next to me. That can't be true for me. Why would God come to earth for me? Why would God love me?'

Do you hear it the same way? **Maybe the messages you've heard about God are that God only scolds, threatens, and keeps tabs, rather than inviting, forgiving, and embracing.**

***There is no doubt that we humans are less than perfect. We wonder who we are. We hurt our neighbors and ourselves. We choose division over unity and hierarchy over protecting the vulnerable.*** Yet, believe me, this Baby Jesus is born tonight for all of us, every son or daughter of God worshipping anywhere in the world this night. And this Jesus is born particularly for you! That is not only Good News, it is the news that changes our very lives.<sup>iv</sup>

God loves us. God looks upon us with honor and dignity. God knows the plans and future for our life. God asks nothing of us, only to open our hearts to discover this incredible love. Jesus will love us, no matter our past or brokenness. He accepts us as we are because He understands being broken and hurt. We can talk with God as if we are talking with our best friend or spouse or confidant. God longs to know everything about us, from our perspective, even though God created every hair on our heads and each beat of our heart. The love that you already know from your family or friends...imagine that love exponentially larger and then larger still and then...even larger.

No one seems to know the origin of this story, but Paul Harvey told it long ago.

There was a kind, decent, mostly good man. Generous to his family, upright in his dealings with other men. But he just didn't believe all that incarnation stuff which the churches proclaim at Christmas Time. It just didn't make sense and he was too honest to pretend otherwise. He just couldn't swallow the Jesus Story, about God coming to Earth as a man. "I'm truly sorry to distress you," he told his wife, "but I'm not going with you to church this Christmas Eve." He said he'd feel like a hypocrite. That he'd much rather just stay at home, but that he would wait up for them. And so he stayed and they went to the midnight service.

Shortly after the family drove away in the car, snow began to fall. He went to the window to watch the flurries getting heavier and heavier and then went back to his fireside chair and began to read his newspaper. Minutes later he was startled by a thudding sound. Then another, and then another. Sort of a thump or a thud. At first he thought someone must be throwing snowballs against his living room window. But when he went to the front door to investigate he found a flock of birds huddled miserably in the snow. They'd been caught in the storm and, in a desperate search for shelter, had tried to fly through his large landscape window.

Well, he couldn't let the poor creatures lie there and freeze, so he remembered the barn. That would provide a warm shelter, if he could direct the birds to it. Quickly

he put on a coat, galoshes, tramped through the deepening snow to the barn. He opened the doors wide and turned on a light, but the birds did not come in. He tried giving them bread crumbs with a path to the doorway of the stable. He tried catching them and then shooing them into the warmth. Finally he tried waving his arms, but they flew in every direction.

And then, he realized, that they were afraid of him. To them, he reasoned, I am a strange and terrifying creature. If only I could think of some way to let them know that they can trust me. That I am not trying to hurt them, but to help them. But how?

“If only I could be a bird,” he thought to himself, “and mingle with them and speak their language. Then I could tell them not to be afraid. Then I could show them the way to safe, warm ...to the safe warm barn. But I would have to be one of them so they could see, and hear and understand.”

At that moment the church bells began to ring. The sound reached his ears above the sounds of the wind. And he stood there listening to the bells playing (Adeste Fidelis) O Come All ye Faithful. He sank to his knees in the snow.

**God chose to come to earth, in human form, so each person would know they are loved, with honor and dignity. Jesus was born this night, for you!  
Merry Christmas! Amen.**

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.davidlose.net/2015/12/christmas-eveday-c-keep-it-simple/>

<sup>ii</sup> Chicken Soup for the Soul; Christmas Treasury. Jack Canfield & Mark Victor Hansen. Health Communications, Inc. Deerfield Beach, FL. 2001. Pg 30-31. Reprinted by permission. Linda C Raybern. 1995.

<sup>iii</sup> WT Wright. Luke for Everyone. Westminster John Knox Press. Louisville, KY. 2004. Pg 22.

<sup>iv</sup> <https://www.davidlose.net/2015/12/christmas-eveday-c-keep-it-simple/>