

HOPE TO A WEARY WORLD

Read: Luke 2:1-20

Luke 2

The Birth of Jesus Christ

1 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole empire should be registered. 2 This first registration took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. 3 So everyone went to be registered, each to his own town.

4 Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family line of David, 5 to be registered along with Mary, who was engaged to him and was pregnant. 6 While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. 7 Then she gave birth to her firstborn son, and she wrapped him tightly in cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

The Shepherds and the Angels

8 In the same region, shepherds were staying out in the fields and keeping watch at night over their flock. 9 Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them,





"Don't be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: 11 Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be the sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped tightly in cloth and lying in a manger."

13 Suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host[g] with the angel, praising God and saying:

14 Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to people he favors!

15 When the angels had left them and returned to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go straight to Bethlehem and see what has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."

16 They hurried off and found both Mary and Joseph, and the baby who was lying in the manger. 17 After seeing them, they reported the message they were told about this child, 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. 19 But Mary was treasuring up all these things in her heart and meditating on them. 20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had seen and heard, which were just as they had been told.

Reflect

Describing our world as weary seems almost as an understatement. The ability to have access to news from all over the world just seems to magnify this sentiment. Lately, the news from almost everywhere seems to be bad news. There is genocide in China, famine in Madagascar, new COVID variants, earthquakes in Haiti, there are threats of war in Ukraine, there is



terrorism in Afghanistan, and we have inflation and poor economic forecast for the future. Political leaders promise things will get better if we just follow their lead, but does anyone really believe them anymore? The world is weary and seemingly without hope.

We often hear, and even say ourselves, things used to be simple and easy way back when..." In some ways, yes; in other ways, no. Let's go back to 2,000 years ago in Judea. Herod the Great was the political power over the region. He was half Jewish, placed in power by the Roman Empire, Caesar Augustus, to control this area of Judea. Herod was ruthless and cunning. He was given to fits of rage, stimulated by an increasing paranoia about threats to him and his throne. He murdered his family members, his son, and his wife. Herod the Great was certifiably crazy. Completely full of himself. Obsessed with power and control. Herod the Great, had another name as well, "King of the Jews".

But on one fateful night, seemingly like any other night, in a little town a mere six miles away from the grand palace of Herod the Great, the true King of the Jews was born. In the humblest of all manners, the most extraordinary miracle occurred. The Messiah, the Anointed One, had been born to unimportant people, who couldn't even find a place to sleep in the small town beyond a barn amongst the stench of the animals and animal dung. Our Lord and Savior's first bed was a feeding trough for animals.

And who gets the news first? The important people, the political leaders, the rich, the powerful? No! Not at all! In the most extraordinary viral moment that ever happened, happens to lowly, poor shepherds, who had to stay outside in the fields amongst the elements with their flocks to protect them. They are the ones who first get the news that a Savior was born for them. The Messiah, the Lord had come.



Can you imagine having never seen anything brighter than a campfire at night, never seeing a traffic light, or an area lit up like the Vegas strip or the Las Vegas Speedway with Christmas lights? Well, I can tell you, nothing we can see today or possibly ever see here on earth will match what these shepherds saw that fateful night. They witnessed the night sky exploding with a multitude of angels who had the glory of the Lord shining around them!! Can you imagine? Can you imagine the sight and sounds of angels praising God singing "Glory to God in the highest"?!

Then, after the Angels returned to heaven, these shepherds rushed into Bethlehem to see what happened. They found Mary and Joseph and baby Jesus, just as they were told. They left praising and glorifying God.

I wonder sometimes what the conversations amongst the shepherds were the days, the hours, the moments before the angels appeared, before they encountered Jesus. What were they talking about before it happened? Were they complaining about the taxes they had to pay? Were they fearful of the Romans? Of Herod? Of what is happening in their country? Were they worried how they were going to feed their families? Were they tired? Were they worn down from life? Did all seem lost? Maybe so. Maybe they were just like us.

But all of that changed in an instant. The instant they heard about the Messiah, the Lord, that a Savior had been born. They had hope. Hope was real. Hope was here.

Their circumstances still hadn't changed, they probably still had to pay heavy taxes. Herod and the Romans were still in power, but something had changed in these shepherds. Their lives were different because of what they knew to be true. A Savior had



come. A Savior of the world. They had hope in Him. That is why they left praising and glorifying God, because Hope is here. It is the same with us. Our world is weary, news is bad from everywhere, with no end in sight, but we have hope. Hope in Jesus. We have confidence that what God did for us in the past, in Christ, on the cross, guarantees us our participation in what God will do in the future. He is our hope. Our hope is in Him. He is the hope to our weary world.

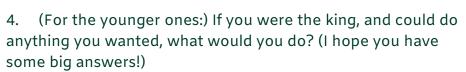
This is why we gather together with our families, our friends, and our church every year to remind ourselves of the hope we have. That no matter the news we hear, no matter the circumstances we have before us, we always have hope. No matter how tired we might feel, how weary we are, we have hope. We have hope in God, who loved us so much that He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16 (CSB)

We glorify and praise God, for the hope we have in Jesus Christ. He is our hope to our weary world. Let us rejoice! Hosanna! Glory to God in the highest!

Questions

- 1. What made you weary this year? What was hard for you to not be able to control, and to hand over to God and trust Him with?
- 2. How did God unexpectedly flip a situation for you in the last year? Blessing out of curse; growing closer to Him through a trial; a bad situation that worked out for the better?
- 3. Repeating stories as old traditions can drain the life out of them. Can you remember the first Christmas you truly celebrated Jesus from the heart? What had God been doing in your life that year?





 Follow-up question: is it strange to you that the King of the Universe chose to be poor and weak and helpless? Who did He do this for? (answer: you!)

Prayer

Father,

We thank You for the hope you have given us. We could fear so much: fear that we will not be received by You because we have sinned; fear that our country is falling apart; fear that we will be persecuted; fear death; fear that our friends and family will not receive You. These fears scratch at the doors of our hearts and threaten our peace every day. Living in fear is wearying, Lord! We admit we often feel weary with fear.

But You meet our fears (Ps 34:4). You speak softly to us and say, "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to gladly give you the kingdom." (Luke 12:32) You have revealed in Your word that you are over all the nations (Ps 103:19, Ps 22:8) and nothing happens apart from Your will (Matt 10:29), and that You work all things together for good for those who love You and are called according to Your purpose (Rom 8:28). You say we are blessed when we are persecuted and promise us the kingdom of Heaven (Matt 5:10). You have conquered death and Hell (Rev 1:18) and You said You were going to prepare a place for us so that where Jesus would be, we could be too (John 14:3), enjoying abundant eternal life in Your presence where there is fullness of joy (Ps 16:11). You comfort us that Your word accomplishes all that You send it out to do (Is 55:11), and that You work through us despite us so that Your name will be praised (2 Cor 4:7).



Thank You for this hope! In this world we know that we will have trials and tribulations, but we take heart because You have overcome these things and You are in us and "greater is the One who is in us than the one who is in the world." So even behind our sorrows we can rejoice in the well-grounded hope You have bought for us with the blood of Your Son. We celebrate His coming! Throw gas on the fire of our joy in Him, so that we would feel like those shepherds felt that night, full of hope and amazed by glory as we think of Jesus this Christmas! Jesus, our King! Our Redeemer! Our Hope! To Him be all praise and honor.

Amen.

Resources

Christmas Devotional Video

Summit Kids Christmas Video

Pre-K Activity Sheet

Hikers Activity Sheet

Explorers Activity Sheet

<u>Preteen Activity Sheet</u>

If you are struggling this holiday season, please don't struggle alone. Reach out.

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