

NEXT STEP: STUDY & SHARE

READINGS

Isaiah 9:2-7

Psalm 96

*Let the heavens rejoice & the earth be glad.
(v11)*

Titus 2:11-14

Luke 2:1-20

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that here on earth we may walk in the light of Jesus' presence & in the last day wake to the brightness of his glory; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives & reigns with you & the Holy Spirit, one God, now & forever. Amen.

SERMON TEXT- Luke 2:1-20

¹In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered... ⁴Joseph 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 & family of David. ⁵He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged & who was expecting a child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son & wrapped him in bands of cloth, & laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. ⁸In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, & the glory of the Lord shone around them, & they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth & lying in a manger." ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God & saying, ¹⁴"Glory to God in the highest heaven, & on earth peace among those whom he favors!" ¹⁵When the angels had left them & gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem & see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶So they went with haste & found Mary & Joseph, & the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured all these words & pondered them in her heart. ²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying & praising God for all they had heard & seen, as it had been told them.

LISTENING TO . . .

GOD- *Christian life is rooted in the Father, Son, & Holy Spirit*

1. Consider the choosing of King David. What similarities do you find with Jesus' birth? *See 1 Samuel 16:1-13; see also 1 Samuel 17; Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:6; Isaiah 64:4; 1 Corinthians 2:8-10*
2. Sketch how you imagine the nativity scene (stick figures are OK; make sure you stick to the Bible story). Which character (not Jesus) do you identify with in the story & how? Add yourself to your picture. Show & tell about your illustration to someone else. This might be a fun & interesting activity for that after-Christmas-dinner "Now what?" time. *See also Isaiah 1:3 for why Nativities include a donkey & a cow/ox*

EACH OTHER- *Sharing & growing with our brothers & sisters in Christ*

3. Reading *Psalm 96* at Christmas implies all of creation rejoices at Jesus' birth (*cf. Psalm 148 read at Easter; cf. Romans 8:18-25 awaiting Jesus' return*). Imagine the *Lion King* "Circle of Life" scene at the manger, lol. What makes it so easy & expected for people *just like us* to ignore Jesus' birth (the event by which time itself is measured; *see #5*)? What holds you back from celebrating like the movie scene?
4. Consider the hymns in today's service. Which one adds insight for you today? What does add? Share your insight and how it matters with someone else. (Review this service on our website, below. By the way, we sing all the Christmas hymns we know between the Christmas Eve, Day, & Lessons & Carols services.)

NEIGHBORS- *Bearing fruit for those not yet our brothers & sisters*

5. Interestingly the people you interact with in everyday life do **not** know the story, let alone the significance, of Jesus' birth. How can you- with graciousness & patience- tell your neighbors at home & work "what has been made known to" you? *Note: 21st c. history has no reason to doubt the fact of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, circa 1 AD.* By the way, where would you tell people to find Jesus in your congregation? (v12)
6. Many folks find great comfort & encouragement attending Easter & Christmas worship (& family events) despite their absence the remainder of the year; how can you be a gracious, grateful host & not a guilt tripper?

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Overlooked

*God desires nearness to humanity so much
that he is willing to risk being overlooked in manger*

-Notes-

KEY VERSE: She gave birth to her firstborn son
& wrapped him in bands of cloth, & laid him in a manger,
because there was no place for them in the inn. (v7)

-NEXT STEPS MEMORY VERSE-

I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people:
to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior,
who is the Messiah, the Lord. (*Luke 2:10-11*)

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