

## The Night Of Our Lord's Nativity.

Text: Luke 2:7-14

Suggested Hymns:

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our address this Christmas Eve is Luke 2:7-14, *<sup>7</sup> And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.*

*<sup>8</sup> Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid.*

*<sup>10</sup> Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. <sup>11</sup> "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup> "And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, 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, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

It is Christmas Eve. Christians around the world are celebrating it tonight. Happy children's voices are telling in song and story the glory and importance of this night. In churches and in homes old and young are singing the praises of God for the blessed event which took place on this holiest of all nights of the year.

Let us therefore consider *The Night of Our Lord's Nativity!* May the Lord bless our meditation.

In a favourite Christmas carol of the world we will sing tonight we will hear the words,<sup>1</sup>

*Silent night, holy night!  
All is calm, all is bright  
Round yon virgin mother and child.  
Holy infant, so tender and mild,  
Sleep in heav'nly peace,*

The account of tonight's great event in the Christmas Gospel is simple enough. The circumstances were humble and lowly. An unknown carpenter and his wife came to Bethlehem. There were no such preparations which accompany the arrival of prominent people. Nothing special was made to receive them. In fact, there was no place for them in the inn. So Joseph and Mary were housed in a stable, and there a manger became the cradle in which Mary's Child was laid.

And yet, all the world had been moved by the registration of the citizens in the vast Roman Empire in order that the birth of the Child of Mary might take place in "*royal David's city.*" For the birth of this Child was the birth of our Saviour, the incarnation of the Son of God, the most supreme, transcendent, incomprehensible fact in the history of the world.

We read in 1 Timothy 3:16, that ***God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.***

The whole scene as depicted by St. Luke is moving in its simplicity and poverty. Luther says it was presented thus to us, "*who are generally so cold, that our hearts might, if possible, be warmed a little by contemplating the humble birth of Christ into the world.*"

This humility is described in Philippians 2:5-8, <sup>5</sup> ***Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,*** <sup>6</sup> ***who, being in the form of God, did***

*not consider it robbery to be equal with God,<sup>7</sup> but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.<sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*

However, this holy night was not to pass without its revelation of divine glory. The hymnist writes,<sup>2</sup>

*To shepherds as they watched by night  
Appeared a host of angels bright;*

Humble men, engaged in their occupation as shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem, where David had once tended the sheep of his father Jesse, were the first to hear of the great Christmas message.

This is recorded in Luke 2:10-12, <sup>10</sup> *Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.* <sup>11</sup> *“For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.* <sup>12</sup> *“And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.”*

The hymnist writes,

*Silent night, holy night!  
Shepherds quake at the sight.  
Glory streams from heav’n afar,  
Heav’nly hosts sing: Hallelujah!  
Christ the Saviour is born,*

What a grand message! What a glorious Christmas greeting!

**“Fear not!”** This Babe is born to remove all fear from people’s hearts and to replace it with faith, love, and trust. **“Good tidings of great joy”** — for centuries the faithful people of God had been waiting for these glad tidings.

The hymnist writes,<sup>3</sup>

*What the fathers most desired,  
What the prophets' heart inspired,  
What they longed for many a year,  
Stands fulfilled in glory here.*

***“To all people,”*** Scripture says in 1 John 2:2 that Jesus *Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.* And our text says,<sup>11</sup> ***“For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.***

Jesus who was born in the lowly manger is the Saviour of the shepherds and also ours. In this way the Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled, as well as such special words to Mary as written in Luke 1:35, ***“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.”***

And Zacharias prophesied in Luke 1:77-79,<sup>77</sup> ***To give knowledge of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins,***<sup>78</sup> ***Through the tender mercy of our God, With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us;***<sup>79</sup> ***To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace.”***

May this great fact that tonight we are celebrating the birth of our Redeemer be impressed anew upon all our hearts!

Finally, we have in the song of the angels *the Gloria in Excelsis*, a declaration of the purpose of the incarnation.

The hymnist writes,<sup>4</sup>

*Shepherds, why this jubilee?  
Why your songs of happy cheer?  
What great brightness did you see?  
What glad tidings did you hear?*

*Come to Bethlehem and see  
Him whose birth the angels sing;  
Come, adore on bended knee  
Christ the Lord, the new-born King:  
Gloria in excelsis Deo*

**“Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”** The Child in the manger came to make peace between God and man, to atone for our sins, which kept man from sonship with God. Jesus brings to earth the peace of heart and conscience which surpasses all understanding. Jesus opens heaven for the sinner, so that the celestial courts might resound with praises sung by men and angels for God’s great love and grace.

The hymnist writes,

*Silent night, holy night!  
Son of God, love’s pure light  
Radiant beams from Thy holy face,  
With the dawn of redeeming grace,  
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth,*

Let us rejoice and keep the feast of Christmas by praising God for all that He has done on this glorious night. The night became light when the heavens opened and the angels descended. It has also made light with heavenly brightness on the night of sin and death, for all who believe in Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord.

Let us now listen to the children’s presentation of the prophecy and fulfilment of the birth of our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Hymn 629

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<sup>2</sup> Hymn 25

<sup>3</sup> Hymn 14

<sup>4</sup> TAC 7, Angels we have heard on high