

## Rejoicing In The Christ Child.

Text: Luke 2:1-20

Suggested Hymns:

34, 633, 33, 634, 627

1) Because He Is The Promised Messiah

2) Because He Is Our Saviour

3) Because He Is The Lord

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 sermon today is Luke 2:1-20, <sup>1</sup> *And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.* <sup>2</sup> *This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria.* <sup>3</sup> *So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city.*

<sup>4</sup> *Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David,* <sup>5</sup> *to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child.* <sup>6</sup> *So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered.* <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!"**

<sup>15</sup> *So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." <sup>16</sup> *And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a**

manger. <sup>17</sup> Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. <sup>18</sup> And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. <sup>19</sup> But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them. (NKJV)

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

Dear friends in Christ,

The painting of the *Last Supper* by Leonardo da Vinci is no doubt one of his best known works. Many, however, do not know about the little ship which originally graced one corner of that magnificent painting.

Da Vinci first painted the essentials: the table, Christ, the apostles, the elements for the Last Supper, and the walls for background. At that point the painting was really complete.

However, the lower part of the painting looked rather bare to this great artist, so with painstaking care he added a little ship to one of the lower corners.

When the painting was exhibited for the first time, Leonardo da Vinci went there in disguise to listen to the remarks of those who came to view his new painting.

To his amazement very few people seemed to notice the Last Supper, and any remarks about Christ, who was in the center of the painting, were almost totally absent. That little ship which he had added was getting most of the attention and admiration. As soon as the people were gone, he took his brush and wiped that little ship off the canvas lest it continue to detract from what was central.

Is there a parallel between that painting and Christmas? It was God who gave us Christmas. The essence of Christmas is recorded in Luke chapter 2 which was just read.

The Christ Child is born and laid in a manger; angels appear with the Good News: *“For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord;”* the heavenly host sings in jubilation: *“Glory to God in the*

*highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!;*” the shepherds hurry to Bethlehem to worship Jesus as their Saviour, and after telling others, return home to praise and glorify God. That is Christmas complete — God’s wonderful gift to mankind.

But man wasn’t satisfied to leave Christmas as simple as that. We added our own little ships — Christmas trees, Santa Claus, family dinners, Christmas toys and presents. The idea, of course, was to enhance God’s gift in Christ. But, are we suffering the same experience of Leonardo da Vinci? Are the little ships we added getting so much attention that the essence of Christmas is blurred or forgotten?

*“I’m all exhausted,”* remarked a certain woman after Christmas. *“I’m tired of entertaining, cooking, and family get-togethers. I didn’t even have time to go to church on Christmas Day.”*

The little ships robbed her of Christmas with its joy. If we are not enjoying Christmas, we would do well to ask ourselves whether the little ships have also gotten in our way.

Every Christmas we sing,<sup>1</sup>

O come, all ye faithful,  
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;  
*O come, let us adore Him,*  
*Christ the Lord!*

That is precisely what the shepherds did. As soon as the angels had announced God’s gift in Christ, they said, *“Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us”* and the evangelist tells us *“And they came with haste.”*

Not only that, but when they found the Christ Child they worshiped Him as their Saviour, spread the Good News of the Saviour’s birth, and returned home praising and glorifying God for His unspeakable gift.

The joy of Christmas was not limited to the shepherds. The evangelist informs us specifically that Jesus’ mother Mary rejoiced with them as the shepherds repeated the angels’ song and that she kept all of it in her heart.

Of course, Christmas doesn't end with Christmas Day. Unlike other Christmas gifts God's gift doesn't wear out. The Wise Men, Simeon, Anna, Peter, James, John, Luther, you and I together with millions who believe, have joined in the joy of Christmas. Today we sing again: "*Joy to the world, the Lord is come!*"

Why? What is so fascinating, thrilling, and wonderful about God's Christmas gift, the Christ Child? The angels themselves give us the answer. So today let us rejoice in the Christ Child. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. We Rejoice In The Christ Child Because He Is The Promised Messiah**

The angel said, "*For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.* The word "Christ" means the Promised Messiah, the one chosen, sent, and anointed by God to be our Prophet, Priest, and King.

For thousands of years the Lord told His people that the Messiah would come. The Old Testament is loaded with prophecies. Last night our children in the Christmas program recited some of these great promises which God had made to His people.

We also heard that to Adam and Eve God made the first promise,<sup>15</sup> *And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.*"<sup>2</sup>

To Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob He declared,<sup>18</sup> "*In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.*"<sup>3</sup>

All Israel was informed that this Messiah or Deliverer would be born of a virgin.<sup>4</sup> He would be called "*Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.*"<sup>5</sup> He would become our substitute by taking our sins upon Himself and suffering in our stead.<sup>6</sup> He would rise again even though they crucified Him.<sup>7</sup> And He would establish a Kingdom which would never end.<sup>8</sup>

The Messiah became the *desire of all nations*,<sup>9</sup> their hope for deliverance as well as a new and better life. Year after year they waited. Suddenly and silently

it happened. The Messiah was born. The angels said: *“The Christ is here.”* That is why the shepherds hurried to Bethlehem with such joy.

We are even more fortunate than the shepherds. True, they heard the angels sing. But we have all the prophecies which they had in the Old Testament plus the glorious testimony of the apostles who lived with Jesus and witnessed the fulfilment of one prophecy after another, saw Him after His resurrection, and wrote it all down for us by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.<sup>10</sup>

Through the Holy Scriptures we too hear the angels sing, *“For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.* The shepherds didn’t doubt the angel. Why should we doubt the word of the Holy Spirit who speaks to us through the Holy Scriptures? To Bethlehem hasten with joyful accord to worship the Christ Child as *the Promised Messiah.*

## **2. We Rejoice In The Christ Child Because He Is Our Saviour**

We rejoice in the Christ Child with the shepherds, secondly, because He is our Saviour. The angel said, *“For there is born to you ... a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.*

This is the very heart of the angel’s message. He is the Promised Messiah; He is our Lord; but above all He is our Saviour. As Luther says in the explanation to the Second Article: *“He has redeemed me a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sin, death, and the power of the devil.”*

The prophet Isaiah had written, *All we like sheep have gone astray.*<sup>11</sup> The shepherds understood this better than most people. From experience they knew the waywardness of sheep and their tendency to go astray. They knew sheep once lost remained lost until someone found them.

They also knew that they had acted just like sheep, had often forsaken the Father’s way to go their own way, and had lost themselves forever. Their situation was far worse than that of sheep. Lost sheep might die of starvation or be eaten by wolves. But unless found and delivered, the shepherds would be devoured by the devil to suffer in hell forever.

What glorious news! *“Unto you is born ... a Savior!”* It is no wonder that the shepherds hurried to Bethlehem to worship Him as Saviour. It is no wonder

that we are in church this morning to sing His praises. We all like sheep have gone astray. Christ our Saviour is born. We are delivered from sin, death, and the devil forever.

But, more. We are saved not only from an evil life. We are saved for a good and eternal life. In Christ we are new creatures. We are saved for a life of joy, hope, service, love, peace, and a multitude of other blessings which make the full life.

Peace is one of the blessings specifically mentioned in our text. The host of angels sang, ***“Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”***

Sin is the great divider. Sin is the cause of all hatred; of wars, of quarrels between husbands and wives, labour and management, parents and children, brothers and sisters, church members or club members; and especially of all enmity between God and man.

Christ is the remedy. Isaiah called Jesus the Prince of Peace.<sup>12</sup> He came and removed those feelings which separate, which set man against God and man against man. He is called the Prince of Peace because He accomplished what no man could ever do. That His purpose was accomplished is evident from the angels’ song, ***on earth peace, goodwill toward men!***

It was the day after Christmas when a child unexpectedly asked her mother: *“Do angels ever lie?”* *“Why, no,”* replied the mother. *“Then, how come,”* she asked, *“do you and daddy still quarrel and fight when the angels sang “Peace on earth’?”*

First and foremost Christ established peace between God and man. St. Paul writes, ***“God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.”***<sup>13</sup> In wilfulness we walked away from God and burned the bridges behind us. We could never get back to God on our own. Fear, doubt, suspicion created an unbridgeable gulf between us.

But Christ came and built a bridge across that gulf. He suffered what we should have suffered. He was crucified and rejected that we might live and be accepted. Fear, doubt, suspicion, enmity — everything that separated — has been removed by Christ’s love. The bridge has been rebuilt. All we need do is go across to our waiting Father.

The angels are right — there is peace on earth — and anyone who wants it can have it. Is anyone here this morning still at odds with God? Do you feel guilty or afraid? There is no need. Our Saviour is born. There is peace on earth. Just go over the bridge to the Father, and He will accept you with open arms.

Having peace with God we can also forgive one another and live at peace with one another as so many of us do. We forgive one another, love one another, rejoice together in our homes. We are different than most people in this world. Do you know why? Because that Babe in the manger is the Prince of Peace, and we have given Him room in our hearts. To Bethlehem hasten with joyful accord to worship the Christ Child as *your Saviour*.

### **3. We Rejoice In The Christ Child Because He Is The Lord**

We rejoice with the shepherds furthermore because this promised Messiah and Saviour is also our Lord. The angel said, *“For there is born to you ... Christ the Lord.* This isn’t just beautiful, poetic language. Angels are careful and precise in what they say just as the Holy Spirit was careful and precise in what He had the apostles record in the Bible.

This Babe in the manger is the Lord. Not just one among many, but *“the Lord.”* He is Lord of lords, King of kings, the Beginning and the End, the One who was and is and ever shall be. By Him all things were made which are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth.<sup>14</sup>

It is no wonder that when the shepherds found Jesus they worshiped Him. And it is no wonder that we are here to worship Him today. He is still Lord of all.

What a Lord He is! All earthly kings have their limitations. Their kingdoms will end. They make promises and later find themselves unable to keep them. Look at the sickness, the poor, the strife which is found in every earthly kingdom or nation. No earthly king will ever have the power to eradicate all that is evil.

But that Babe in the manger is different. He cleansed the lepers, healed the blind, cured the sick, gave hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, and fed 5,000 with five loaves and two fish. This was just the beginning of His lordship.

In His eternal, heavenly kingdom there will be no more pain, poverty, sickness, or anything which mars or embitters our life. We read in Revelation 7:15-17, *And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them.*<sup>16</sup> *“They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat;”*<sup>17</sup> *“for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”*

So to Bethlehem hasten with joyful accord to worship the Christ Child as your *Promised Messiah, Saviour, and Lord.* 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 34

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 3:15

<sup>3</sup> Gen. 22:18; cf. Gal. 3:16

<sup>4</sup> Isa. 7:14

<sup>5</sup> Isa. 9:6

<sup>6</sup> Isa. 53:5,6

<sup>7</sup> Psa. 16:10; cf. Acts 2:27

<sup>8</sup> Isa. 9:7

<sup>9</sup> Haggai 2:7

<sup>10</sup> John 14:26; 16:13

<sup>11</sup> Isaiah 53:6

<sup>12</sup> Isa. 9:6

<sup>13</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:19

<sup>14</sup> Col. 1:16; John 1:3