

Scripture: Luke 2:11; Philippians 2:11

Message: Jesus, The Light of the World

December 25, 2018; Bethel CRC, Brockville, ON

Christmas Day

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It was an *angel* that spoke to the shepherds....It was a *baby* they found in the manger.

It was a glorious heavenly choir that sang....It was a husband and wife with a newborn child that they found resting in a place where animals were kept.

There was no halo around the baby's face. There was nothing obviously different about this baby. He squirmed and cried and slept and nursed, just like any other baby they had seen.

It all happened in Bethlehem. Many, many years earlier a young woman named Ruth married Boaz in Bethlehem and they had a son whom they named Obed. Obed had a son named Jesse. Jesse was the father of David. All were born in Bethlehem. David was a great king and so Bethlehem came to be known as the city of David. Years later Joseph was born, also from that line of descendants of David. When the Roman emperor decided to carry out a census of the people under his dominion, Joseph had to have his name counted in the city of his ancestor David.

This is not a fairy tale. Two people, a husband and a pregnant wife, travelled some 90 miles or 140 kilometres, on foot. In Bethlehem, the town of David, the baby was born. It was a normal human birth of a normal human baby.

As we continue reading in this chapter, we read that Jesus was circumcised eight days after he was born. That was the usual practice for baby boys born in Jewish families. After 40 days the new parents took their son to the temple in Jerusalem to present the sacrifices required by God in the law of Moses. When the apostle Paul writes in Galatians 4 that Jesus was born under the law, he is emphasizing Jesus' humanity. Jesus humbled himself to a position of being required to obey God's law like any other person on this earth.

In Philippians 2 we read that Jesus, being God, left the glory of heaven to humble himself, coming to earth as a man. Today is the day that we remember that he was *born*. Jesus did not descend or fly or suddenly appear. He was born, a baby. Jesus became human, just like you and I.

Never forget that, when you face the struggles and weaknesses of your humanity. When you face temptation, know that Jesus was tempted. When you face death, know that

Jesus wept at Lazarus' grave. When you face sickness, know that Jesus had many sick people come before him day after day. When you are tired, know that Jesus slept on a boat tossing on the Sea of Galilee. When you are misunderstood, know that Jesus' family wanted to take him away from the crowds because they were concerned for his health and sanity instead of understanding his ministry. When you think that God is out of touch with reality, know that Jesus was in touch with human reality when he came to live on this earth.

Jesus is the Light of the world, coming to humanity to bring the light of God into our darkness. He took our nature, so that he could take our place in being perfectly obedient to the law of God. He became human to take the punishment for sin on our behalf. Jesus became human and was obedient unto death, even death on a cross.

Jesus is the Light of the world, shining the light of grace and forgiveness and hope to overcome the darkness of sin and death. We are forgiven. We do not need to fear death or the grave, for Jesus has come.

This first coming is one part of the story. To hear the angel's declaration to the shepherds, "He is Christ the Lord" also invites us to see beyond the manger to the throne of heaven. Jesus lived, died, rose again and ascended to heaven. "God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name."

This speaks of the name that was chosen by God the Father for his Son. In Matthew 1:21, the Lord gave instructions to Joseph to name the son of Mary "Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." God chose the name because of its special meaning. The name Jesus means "the Lord saves." By giving this name, God was identifying the special purpose of His Son's coming to earth.

"A Saviour, Jesus, has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord."

Jesus Christ is Lord. In his name we acknowledge his power and dignity, his authority, honour, and dominion. He is worthy of adoration and praise. Every knee will bow in honour and adoration before this name and all that it stands for. Every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Do you hear the unconditional and absolute tone of these words? Jesus is given the name that is above *every* name. *Every* knee will bow and *every* tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. There will be a day when all opposition and rejection of Jesus will end. There will be a day when all people will acknowledge Jesus for who he is: not a baby anymore. He

is Lord. Jesus is easier to handle and pay attention to as a cute, little baby. One day all creation will bow to Jesus as Lord.

Don't wait for that future day before you surrender to Jesus as Lord. Bow your knee before him. Believe in Jesus as your Saviour from sin. Confess with your mouth that Jesus is your Lord. Honour him each day with your whole life.

See beyond the manger to the cross and to the throne in heaven.

He is Christ the Lord....You will find a baby.

He is Almighty God....he is like us.

He is all-powerful and by him all things were made....he humbled himself to be a servant.

He is exalted to the highest place, and one day he will come again!

Glory to God, who loves us so much to send his Son!

On earth peace, because Jesus has restored our relationship with God. He has made it possible to restore our relationships with one another.

Jesus Christ is Lord. Know and believe that someday we will be with our Lord in glory, for he has taken our flesh to be with him. Someday he will come again to make all things right.

Our Christmas celebration is one small part of this glorious celebration. He has come. He is here. And he is coming again!

Praise be to the Lord!

Amen.