

For Your Sake He Became Poor

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 15 October 2023

Preacher: Bill Story

- [0 : 0 0] Well, how are we all doing? Fair to Midland. Fair to Midland. That's fair play Colorado to Midland, Texas. That's perfect fair.
- It's good to be here. Good to see you all. We're in, take your Bibles out with me please and turn to the Gospel of Luke chapter 2.
- And in the Gospel of Luke chapter 2 you'll find the story of Jesus' birth until December. So, but I guess the stores I was told already have Christmas decorations out.
- We can start thinking of Christmas already. What Luke provides us with in chapter 2 here are details about Jesus' birth that we find nowhere else.
- Only Luke has provided us how, where Jesus, well not where Jesus was born, but how Jesus was born. The fact that there was a manger involved.
- [1 : 0 9] There were shepherds involved. There were angels involved. Many details that Luke tells us that we would not be aware of if we only had Matthew and Mark and John.
- And so Luke has, as we know, has investigated everything carefully and has written down in orderly fashion so that we might have certainty about what we have been taught.
- And so he has provided us some details to ponder carefully. And so I know you've heard this story many times, but as I read it, I'd like you to try to enter into it as if you're hearing it for the first time.
- That's kind of hard, but I want you just to hear the words. So if you're able, please stand as I read from Luke chapter 2, verses 1 through 20. In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.
- This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria, and all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary his betrothed, who was with a child.
- [2 : 5 5] And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a feeding trough, because there was no place for them in the inn.
- And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear.
- And the angel said to them, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.
- For unto you is born this very day in the city of David a Savior, who is Messiah, Lord.
- And this will be a sign for you. You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a feeding trough. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those of good pleasure.

- [4 : 37] When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.
- And they went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph and the baby a little baby lying in a feeding trough.
- And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.
- But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as it had been told them.
- So it reads, let us pray. Father, grant us eyes and ears, and especially hearts, to receive what we hear today.
- [5 : 46] May we, like Mary, treasure up these things. and ponder them. Put these pieces all together that we have gathered that you say about our Lord Jesus.
- May we consider anew, Father, this very, very familiar story. May we see it through Mary's eyes and may we see it through the shepherds' eyes.
- Just as it happened. This we pray in Christ's name. Amen. Please be seated. Now I'm on Oregon time, so I got lots of time, I think.
- No. All right, so I want to do a Christmas quiz. Fiction. Fact or fiction? Fiction. Fiction. Fiction. That could be fiction, too.
- Fact or fiction? Truth or error? I don't know. Jesus was born on December 25th. Yes. True. Fiction.
- [7 : 01] In the year zero. Oh. Fiction. Fiction. Fiction. He was more likely born in March, April, in the year 6 B.C.
- Jesus was laid in a manger because there was no room in the inn. Fact or fiction? Fiction. Fact. It was also because the innkeeper was moody, mean, and didn't want to go to bed.
- Fiction. Fiction. Fiction? Well, we don't know, actually, but okay. Jesus, when the cattle were lowing, no crying he made.
- Fact or fiction? Well, it's in the carol. No problem. It's in a way with the manger, right? By the way, I counted 14 carols, Christmas carols, that came from Luke chapter 2, just in our hymnal.
- The wise men came later than the shepherds. True.
- [8 : 15] True? The three kings came with the shepherds. What do you think? Fiction. What do you think? Fiction. It's a trick question because the wise men and the kings are the same people.
- Yeah. And they weren't kings. They were wise men. They were king makers, not kings. They were people like Daniel. Okay.
- The, oh, it was the star that led the shepherds to the manger. True or false? Yes. False. False. False. False. I got trues and falses.
- We just read it. Matthew talks about the star who led who? The kings. The wise men.
- Okay. I don't know who the kings are, but they're the wise men. Yeah. We have the we three kings of all, right? All right. It's like, where, what kings are we talking about? And were there just three?
- [9 : 16] Three. Yeah, it's probably like 30. They think of three because they brought frankincense. Myrrh. Myrrh and Frank.
- No. Frank, myrrh and... Okay. Fred. Fred. Fred. The manger is a crib.

No. Of the first century. False. False. No, just one time. Yeah, false. Correct. The manger is a feeding trough for animals, not a quaint little sentimental decorative piece.

Joseph planned to divorce Mary. True. True. True. True. Why did he not? The angel told him, she's a good girl.

She didn't do anything wrong. It was the Holy Spirit. And you marry him, boy. You marry her. That's why. That's why, yeah. He was a good man. He was a good man.

[10 : 20] So, how many times have we heard the Christmas story? You know, I mean, how many Christmases have we been through? How many times have we seen it on TV? We've watched the Charlie Brown Christmas, you know?

We've watched, you know, every version of Christmas play we've seen, right? Have we become so familiar with its stunning message that we've lost the power of its message?

There's a danger of hearing something so many times we get used to it. And in this story that Luke tells, there are really, if we're hearing it for the first time, that are truly stunning and, in fact, shocking.

When we think about how the Son of God came into this world. Luke gives us some details about Jesus' birth that no other gospel gives.

And some of these details are quite surprising. And what Luke pictures for us, he gives us images. What he pictures give us, illumines for us that this Savior has come as a humble Savior for humble people.

[11 : 50] That's the picture Luke brings. So, on one level, I want you to see kind of on the big picture, in what Luke describes, there is a story within a story.

There's a tale of two kings here. In verse 1, we start with the king, Caesar. He's put before us, in verse 1, he is Caesar Augustus.

Augustus is a title that was given to him, which means revered one, the supreme one. In fact, he established the imperial cult to be worshipped as a god.

This is Caesar Augustus, the king of Rome. His name was Octavius. He was the nephew, grandnephew of Julius Caesar. Heard of Julius Caesar?

He was handpicked by Julius Caesar to succeed him. He became the very first emperor of Rome. Truly the emperor of Rome when they defeated Mark Anthony.

[13 : 01] He became the sole emperor of Rome. From BC 27 through AD 14, so he was the emperor through that time. He also established Pax Romana.

Anybody know what that is? Chicken pox? Chicken pox? No. Good guess. The piece of rose. The piece of rose. He was famous for that.

How did he establish it? Not peacefully. It was an outward piece. His decree, now we see in verse 1, he sent out a decree, which is, in other words, this is the law.

His law was sent to the whole world. Of course, the whole world that Rome knew and had influence upon. To the whole world. And it was a decree to register people.

And why do you get registered with the government? So you pay taxes. Okay? This is something that Rome did regularly. This is something that was their main policy and procedure.

[14 : 05] They didn't just take one census every once in a while. They took censuses, registrations every few years because those Jews keep multiplying.

Just like Egypt realized these Jews keep multiplying. You've got to do something to control them. Caesar had the same policy. There is a debate about whether Luke was, oh, no, I'm not going to get into that right now.

So his decree to the whole world also reminded Israel, by the way, that they are not free and they are under oppression of Rome. The iron fist of Rome.

And they will pay taxes. There will be peace because they will pay taxes. And if they revolt, they will be taken down. So there's one king, Caesar Augustus.

There's another king that doesn't sound like a king. He's introduced in verse 7. He's born in a stable, not in the palace. He comes not on a throne but comes in a manger, in a feeding trough.

[15 : 16] He left his throne to enter the world and be placed in a common, humble, smelly feeding trough.

A manger. He did not send a decree to the world. He was announced to simple shepherds. What a contrast.

He doesn't sound like a king, the way he's introduced. But then when the angel tells us in verse 11, this is who he is. He is not only a savior, he is a king.

He is the Messiah. He is the king of kings. And he adds the title Lord.

He is Savior Christ Lord. He will come to save his people from their enemies and from their sins and establish not a Pax Romana but a true peace of God.

[16 : 17] So there's your contrast. So there's a deeper level I want us to look at in Luke chapter 2. It shows us some truths that are of greater significance.

There are two surprising details of Jesus' birth revealed here that illustrate how he has come to save and who he has come to save.

Two details and actually two images. As we read the story and we think about this is the Son of God coming into the world, there are two things here that would surprise us if we're thinking as a Jew and as we're thinking about the Messiah coming.

One is that stands out and is emphasized over and over in Luke's telling is the manger, a feeding trough. Mary lays them in a feeding trough.

The angel tells the shepherds, here's your sign. You'll find them in a feeding trough. When they go and they find Mary and Joseph and they find the baby, what do they find?

[17 : 28] In a feeding trough. Why a feeding trough? And the other surprising detail is who are the first eyewitnesses?

Who are the first ones that the angels of the sky proclaim this great news to? A few shepherds in the field. What?

You got to have a bigger audience than that. You got to get the news out, don't you? You're just, it's shepherds? Okay, so when we think about it, those are shocking facts.

This is the King of Kings. This is the Son of God. We lay him in a feeding trough. Why does God want that? And then, who does he tell? Not the priests, not the rulers, not Caesar.

A few shepherds in a field. That's not the way we would do it, is it? That's poor marketing, don't you think? This is God's way.

[18 : 36] So, let's look at those two pictures that Luke presents to us. First is the sign. We'll call it the sign because the angel told the shepherds later, this is the sign. You find him in the manger.

First is the sign, a manger. What does that picture, what does that present for us? Why is that the sign? What's significant about that?

What pictures does that tell us about this Messiah that comes to save? Well, let me just quote Paul. I think Paul summarizes it in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9.

Though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor. That you, by his poverty, may become rich.

Why does he come in a manger? Because he leaves his throne to become a servant. And to give his life as a ransom.

[19 : 39] That's what the manger reminds us of. So, Luke gives us some details here. Verses 1 through 3 tells us about the time when Jesus comes.

It's a time when we have Caesar Augustus reigning on the throne. There's a decree that goes out. We hear about this verse 2.

That this was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. Now, Quirinius, Quirinius, it's column Q.

There is debate. And there are a lot of liberal scholars that say, See, see, Luke made an error. Luke made an error. Because according to historical record of Josephus, Quirinius wasn't governor until 6 AD.

12 years later. And that's when he did a census. Well, Luke mentions first census. And he doesn't necessarily say that Quirinius had the title governor, but that he governed or he administrated under Caesar a census.

[20 : 57] And why would Luke call it the first census if there was not another census later? Or, in fact, many registrations for the purpose of taxation.

Just because Josephus does not mention a previous registration does not mean there wasn't one. And why did Josephus only mention the one in 6 AD?

Because there was a revolt that happened after that one. So it was bigger news. Because the registrations were just going on all the time. Why would that one stand out?

Because there was a revolt. The Jews said, It's enough. Tired of paying taxes. About the time Jesus was 12. By the way, Jesus wasn't part of that revolt, was he?

No, he's only 12, but he's sitting in the temple. Okay, we'll get to that story later. So, the time, the place. This is interesting. Where is Jesus born?

[22 : 00] He's born, according to verses 4 and 5, in Bethlehem. Why did he come to Bethlehem? Because there was a census coming out. But why Bethlehem?

Bethlehem is also called the city of David, which surprises us because we thought Jerusalem is the city of David. So how is Bethlehem the city of David? Well, if you read back in your history, you'll read that David was born in Bethlehem.

And that was his hometown. That's where Jesse lived. And that's where the family lived. That's the city of David. That's where he came from. That's where the roots are. That's where the lineage is. Therefore, everyone connected to David, which both Mary and Joseph were connected to David, in order to register for tax, you go to your hometown.

Your place of birth. Now, it may not have been Joseph's place of birth, but it was David's, and that's all that mattered. Joseph was in the clan, the lineage, the house of David.

Now, Bethlehem entered. Why does God want his son born in Bethlehem, not Jerusalem? Why is he not born in Nazareth?

[23 : 11] He's born in Bethlehem. Why Bethlehem? It's a very little town. In fact, we sing, O little town of Bethlehem. How still we see the light. And on and on.

Something about dreamless sleep and stuff. It's a little town. It's really a tiny, obscure, insignificant village. And it was not the Roman rule that you had to go to your place of lineage, because the Romans could care less about what lineage Joseph came from.

They just wanted him to register. It was the Jewish custom. If you're going to register with this foreign oppressor, you will come to the house of your lineage, and there you will make your registration.

But it's interesting that God's hand is involved here. Then the surprise we find in verse 6 and 7. And we find, you know, that while they're there, the time for Mary came for her to give birth.

And she gives birth to her firstborn son, wraps him in swaddling clothes, and lays him in a feeding trough. Because there's no place for them in the inn.

[24 : 26] So here's that sign. Here's that surprise. He's born in a stable or a cave. So stables. So when we go to Israel, if you're going, or if you ever go to Israel and you see, you go to Bethlehem and you will find, there's lots of signs and pictures.

Where to go? You will find the Church of the Nativity. And under the Church of Nativity, because everywhere in Israel, wherever there was a place, there's a church built over it, so you can't see the place very well.

So it's very annoying as a tourist. I don't want to see the church. I want to see the place. So, but this one, at least you can go down, and you go down steps, and you go down into a cave.

And this was definitely an old stable that was used. And the problem is, is the church got there about the fourth century on, and boy, you know, this is just a cave, a barn where Jesus was born.

Not very impressive. We need to make it look like a king was born here. And so they decorate, but you go down into this cave, and there's just jewels over there, sandaliers, and there's lights and candles.

[25 : 38] And it's kind of like, what's going on here? Where in reality, if you went into a cave, or you went into a stable, what would you experience?

Nothing glittery. Well, not man-made glittery. You'd experience smells. You would experience, you know, just a stable.

Where animals are. It's not going to be impressive at all. And there, and Jesus is born in this stable or cave because there's no room in the inn.

There's no place for him in the inn. So, why is that? Did Joseph and Mary get a late start? Now, remember, it's not just Joseph and Mary that come to register in Bethlehem.

But everyone who's of the line and house and lineage of David. The whole clan is coming to Bethlehem. Bethlehem is a tiny little village. How are they going to handle all these people?

[26 : 47] Where are you going to put all these people? So, if you don't get there early, I don't know. Joseph didn't call ahead and, you know, make reservations, apparently.

And he's traveling with a wife with child. So, it might take a little longer to get there. Why did he bring her along?

She's pregnant, for goodness sake. Joseph, because they're married by now. For one. Because the angel told Joseph, what? You're not divorced. You'll marry her.

And the text tells us that he kept her as a virgin until the baby was born. So, in other words, they're already married. She's called betrothed, right, in verse 5.

Because they haven't consummated. But not because they're not married. Because they haven't consummated marriage. Because Joseph is following orders. It is a true virgin birth.

[27 : 43] But, so, an inn. So, typically, now, Jerusalem would have bigger inns. Remember later in the story when Jesus meets in the upper room?

It's in an inn. It's in a guest room. And that's a nice big one. Jerusalem's a big city. Got lots of bigger inns. In a little village, you know, no Comfort Inn.

No, you know, no Hyatt. None of the, not even a Motel 6. Or Motel 2 Denari. I don't know. It's just little homes.

And a typical home in Israel at that time would be two stories high. In the first store, you come in. And that's where you cook. And that's where you have, you store all your things.

Including your animals at night. So, it would be just kind of an open space down there. And then you go upstairs. And that's where you sleep. So, by the time Joseph and Mary get there.

[28 : 48] Well, there's no room upstairs. You can stay downstairs. Or, perhaps, that's, but we do have a stable next door.

That's down in that hole over there. You stay down there. Which is what the oldest tradition said. That's where they stayed in that cave nearby.

Which was converted into a stable. So, but here's the sign. So, this is what's interesting. The shepherds are told.

Here's the sign of who the Christ is. You'll find him wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger in a feeding trough. That's your sign. How do you know who the king is?

How do you know who the Christ is? How do you know who the Savior is? You're going to find him in a feeding trough. So, when the shepherds go and look for this, you know, they come to Bethlehem.

[29 : 48] One, it's not a big city. Two, they know to look in stables. So, they don't necessarily have to knock on the door. They can probably peek in the downstairs door and see, you know, any babies in here?

The feeding trough? Okay, move on to the next one. And they eventually find the stable where the baby is lying in a manger. Probably not any other babies in the whole country lying in a manger.

So, easy to find. Somewhat. And, by the way, he may be crying. So, that might be, oh, there he is. I think he's over there. Why this sign, though?

Why this sign? Well, as I quoted before, as Paul said, you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

The manger tells us that he came poor. He came humbly. So, why Bethlehem? Why this insignificant little, insignificant little town?

[30 : 58] Well, God had planned that all from the beginning. Right? It's about, Matthew tells us, this fulfills the scripture, the scripture in Micah. Micah 5.2 says this, You, O Bethlehem, Ephrathah, you who are too little to be among the clans of Judah.

Interesting. You, Bethlehem, you're too little to be among the clans. You don't even get clan status. You're so tiny. You need to be a bigger, you gotta have, you know, you gotta have at least ten elders, and all that kind of stuff.

You who are too little to be among the clans of Judah. From you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old.

This is from plan A. This is from way back, from ancient days. Therefore, he shall give them up. Remember, he comes during a time when they're in oppression.

He shall give them up. They shall be under oppressors. Until the time, watch this, until the time when she, who is in labor, has given birth.

[32 : 14] There's a birth that channels when he comes from Bethlehem. Then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel, and he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord and the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.

And they shall dwell secure for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth and he shall be their peace. Gee, I wonder who they're talking about.

Who's this ruler? Who shepherds? Who establishes real peace? This is God's way. Isaiah 53. Who has believed what he has heard from us?

To whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? Who's going to believe this stuff? Who's going to believe that the Son of God will come like this?

For he grew up before him like a young plant, like a root out of dry ground. He had no form or majesty that we should look at him and no beauty that we should desire him.

[33 : 22] He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And as one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised and we esteemed him not.

Why? Because he came and he was laid in a feeding trough. Not very impressive. Not very commanding. Not very promising.

That's our Savior. That's the best God could do. He can move the hand of Caesar to get his child born in the right place, but he can't get him a comfortable crib.

No, it's not about what God can't do. It's about what God wants to do. He is sending a strong, shocking message.

Here's your Messiah. Not pomp. Not parade. Not pageantry. Oh, there's some angels in the sky. Yes, but they're only seen by the little shepherd boys.

[34 : 33] Men. I don't know. This is how God does it. The Savior comes to save by suffering.

He comes to defeat our greatest enemy, which is our sin. Our sin, which has earned our death and the wrath of God.

Our sin, which has separated us from God. Our sin, which has kept us in darkness so that we can't even see that our sin is a problem. Our sin, which deceives us to think that we can fix ourselves.

This is what he comes to deliver us from and every other enemy that our sin causes. He rescues by taking our place.

He comes as a true man. He doesn't come as the king of kings. He comes with a crown of thorns first. He comes to die for us. He comes to earn righteousness for us and then bear our sin on the cross.

[35 : 44] And later, when he rises, he gets his crown. He doesn't come with a crown the first time. He comes with a manger, with a feeding trough.

So that's the sign that the angel's going to tell the shepherds is this manger. That's the first picture we're given that shows us that he comes in humility to conquer in a way that we would never have thought.

To conquer in a way that we never thought that was our real issue. We thought our real issue was Rome. Israel, dear Israel, fighting right now.

But not their real enemy. Oh, an enemy indeed. A cruel and vicious enemy. But not their real enemy that Christ came to conquer.

Our hearts are with Israel, of course. our hearts are with everyone who suffers. But mistake it not.

[37 : 01] As vicious as that enemy is toward Israel now, it's not their greatest enemy. And it's not our greatest enemy either.

Whatever external enemy we experience, it's not our greatest enemy. Our greatest enemy is within. And until we see that, we'll not be able to really deal with those other enemies.

enemies. Because what does our Messiah tell us to do with our enemies? Strike back? Not criticizing Israel.

Of course, they're defending other innocent people. people. I talked to a Jewish man just the other day and he told me of all the atrocities happening during this attack.

The innocent people being slaughtered mercilessly. mercilessly. So look at verse 8.

[38 : 10] We have another image that's surprising. Not only is it a manger, but this great news, this king that is born is revealed to shepherds. The significance of who this child is is told to shepherds.

Luke has told us before when John the Baptist was born, right? His father, filled with the Holy Spirit, talks about the significance of the birth of John the Baptist.

What that's bringing into the world. And now Luke shows us that we're once again as Jesus is now born someone else talks about what the significance is of this birth.

And it's, this time it's an angel. Two shepherds. And what's the message? Verse 11. That the Savior born to you this day is Messiah.

Lord. And you're going to find him in a manger. Christ the Lord. The significance revealed to shepherds is that Christ the Lord is born to save the humble sinner.

[39 : 27] Because why does God reveal it to shepherds? Because the message is coming not to the mighty, not to the conquerors, not to the so-called righteous people.

The message of salvation is coming to shepherds. regular folks, humble folks, unimpressive folks, perhaps broken folks, lowly folks.

That's who this king has come for. So we see, we hear the significance from heaven's revelation.

We see verse 8, the shepherds are out there. And we raise the question, why shepherds? Not priests, not rulers. He's king for the humble. He tells us the gospel in verse 10, right?

The angel says to them, fear not, for behold, I bring you good news. I bring you the gospel. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

[40 : 34] For unto you is born this day. For for you is born this day in the city of David, a savior who is Christ the Lord.

There's the gospel. This baby has three titles by the angel. He is a savior, so he has come to deliver, he's come to rescue. He is Christ, he is Messiah, which means he is king.

He is the staff that comes from Judah. He is the one who's the seed and the descendant of David who will sit on his throne.

He is the Messiah. He is the one who sits at God's right hand in Psalm 110. He is the one that is the son of God in Psalm 2.

He is the Christ. He is the king. He is David's heir. And then he's called Lord.

[41 : 39] Lord. So he's more than just some man, some savior, some David-type person. He's also Lord.

And remember, Jesus had that confrontation with the Pharisees in Luke 20. I think it's chapter 20 where he talks, where he asks the Pharisees, who is the Christ?

Whose son do you say he is? Remember? And they say, oh, he's the son of David. And then Jesus brings up Psalm 110 and says, well, then how can David call him Lord if he's his son?

And of course, they're stumped. Gee, I never thought that one through. Never thought that one through. He's Lord.

That means he's also creator. He's ruler. And as a result, then he tells them this message. He tells them then, verse 12, here's the sign. You're going to find the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

[42 : 46] And then the sky explodes. Then there's the angelic multitude of heavenly hosts praising God and saying, glory God in the highest and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased.

Glory to God in the highest. Interesting, because they say two things. glory in the highest to God, peace on earth to men of good pleasure.

Now, that last phrase of good pleasure is translated many different ways. Right? So, in some places, it's goodwill to men. It's like, no, it doesn't say goodwill to men. It says, it says peace to men.

That's what the text says. And then it says to men of good pleasure. Now, is it of good pleasure that it's the men's good pleasure or is it God's good pleasure? It doesn't say. Is it men who please God or is it God who is pleased to do this?

The text is kind of open. What does it mean? We, when we want, we men who want to translate, we want to translate to make us look good.

[43 : 54] So, we say, well, men who do goodwill. You know, good men. Is that how it works in the gospel? Does God give peace to those that earn it?

No, of course not. So, we, this text is kind of ambiguous, but we use other texts to know, okay, the peace of God comes to men when he has good pleasure to give it to them.

that's more likely what it means. So, then we see earth's response, verse 15.

So, then the shepherds, what are the shepherds going to do with this? Verse 14, verse 15, when the angels went away from them in heaven, the shepherds kind of, you know, after they're stunned, you know, whoa, what just happened?

Then they kind of get their thoughts together and they say, hey, let's go. We got to go over to Bethlehem, see this thing that's happened, which the Lord has made known of. Of course we got to go. Good grief. I mean, how do you miss that message, right?

[44 : 52] The sky fills. Yeah, go. Let's go see. Let's go see. So, they go with haste, right? They go with haste and they found, Mary doesn't tell us about how long it took, how many houses they had to search.

Doesn't tell us how many, if they knocked on doors, how many people they woke up. Hey, you got a baby in here? But they find him. They eventually find him and it wouldn't have taken long because as I said, Bethlehem's pretty small so there's not going to be a lot of, a lot of searching going on.

I don't know how many shepherds that probably spread out and looked at him. Hey, over here, over here, I got a baby crying. Oh, wait, he didn't cry, right? Over here, the donkeys are hungry.

They can't get to their food because there's a baby in there. Okay. Who knows how all that happened? But they found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in a manger, lying in a feeding trough.

And what did they do? When they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning the child. In other words, they told everyone there what happened to them.

[45 : 57] Angel appeared. Angel said this. Sky filled with angels. They said this. And we came to tell you. So, they made it known.

What's interesting here, in earth's response, we have three different responses. We have the response of the shepherds, right? They go and they find the baby and then they tell what they had heard and seen.

Then, verse 18, we have a second group. All who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. Who's the all? How many people are in this stable? Because it's not about what these shepherds told other people later because they don't leave until verse 20.

So, they're still in the stable. They're telling Mary and Joseph. So, is Mary and Joseph and the baby the all? Who's all that's wondering?

I'm thinking this is a full stable with other people in there because Bethlehem's packed because all the clan is there. So, others are hearing what the shepherds come in and tell them.

[47 : 12] Right? So, they all wonder which means they were amazed. They were, it's like when people see a miracle the Bible uses the word they wonder or they marveled at it. It doesn't mean it's a response of faith.

It's simply wow. Wow, wasn't that something? That was wow. You believe that? I don't know the shepherds, you know, I don't know if we can take their, maybe they were drinking the wine out there and the, you know.

Although they said something about a manger and really it was a, huh, I wonder, I wonder, I wonder. So, that's one response to the shepherds. The other response is the people who heard. Then there's verse 19 and there's Mary's response which I think is what Luke wants us to see because I think Mary's response is the right one.

Mary, and notice all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them, verse 19, but Mary. But Mary wasn't just a wanderer.

Mary took it further than that. Mary didn't just say, oh wow, she wanted to take this and treasure it, protect it, store it up, memorize it, and then he adds the word ponder.

[48 : 26] She's pondering and it's in the present continuous, she kept on pondering this. And the word pondering is interesting because it's a word that Jesus used, it's similar to a word that Jesus used with his disciples a lot.

Remember when we went through Mark, Jesus would say to the disciples, do you get it yet? Do you understand? And of course they're like, oh yeah, we got it. But the word understood meant to put things together.

Have you put it together yet? Are you connecting the dots yet, guys? because they would worry about whether we're going to eat or not and Jesus had already fed the 5,000 and he reminds them, guys, remember this?

And then remember this? And remember this? Remember that? Have you put it together yet? Why are you still worried?

Have you put it together yet? Do you see who I am? or are you just in the wonder stage?

[49 : 28] See, Mary's putting it together. She heard, right, what the angel said to her. You're going to conceive, you're going to have a son.

And by the way, this son, he's the promised one. He's going to sit on the throne of his father David, right? I mean, this is the guy. This is the Messiah.

She's pondering that. She goes over to Elizabeth and then Elizabeth says some incredible things. All she did was say, hi, Lizzie. And Lizzie's like, right? Not, you know.

Elizabeth knows stuff. Her baby's leaping in the, you know, she's pondering that too. And then Zechariah, after John is born, Zechariah has some things to say and I'm sure she heard that.

I don't think she left before the birth of John the Baptist. I don't think she'd leave Lizzie on her own there. She's there with the other relatives celebrating the birth of John and she hears Zechariah, all these things that he has to say.

[50 : 36] Now she hears what the shepherds have to say about what the angel said. And she's taken all of this. Plus she had three months with Elizabeth and Zechariah.

Now Zechariah's got to write everything, you know. But do you think they're talking about stuff? Do you think they're putting stuff together? Elizabeth remembers and then Mary remembers and Zechariah's writing everything down.

This is the way to respond to the birth of Jesus is to put these things together and start to gather it and ponder it and to continue to have deep reflection over it.

The story ends in verse 20 where the shepherds go back and now they're glorifying praising God for all that they had heard and seen just as had been told them. For all that they'd witnessed, they heard and they saw.

That's what a witness, they hear, they heard what the angel said and they saw the baby truly as the angel said he would be. Praising God for all that they had witnessed.

[51 : 50] They had witnessed the Savior, the Christ, the Lord in a humble state in a feeding trough and they're rejoicing that they got to see it.

they got to see it. Not the priests, not the rulers, not the they got to see it. Can you imagine? We're just shepherding sheep.

Who are we? And he's told us. Do you feel the same way? Do you feel like you're a shepherd?

Not a shepherd separate but a shepherd like a nobody, you know, like you don't have any status and God revealed it to you? Wow. Wow.

He told me. He doesn't tell everybody. He told me. No, the news is out there but not everybody gets to really hear it. Lots of unbelievers can tell you what the gospel is in word but they don't know what it is.

[53 : 01] because their eyes haven't been opened and their ears haven't been unplugged and their heart hasn't been transformed. But if you have, give him glory and praise.

What difference does all of this make for today? How is it that our salvation impacts our daily lives? Listen to what Paul said to Titus.

He said to them, he said to Titus, remember he's sending Titus to help organize a church and shepherd a church. So he's telling them what you need to teach.

So teach them, remind them, here's several things Titus, remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities. Oh joy. Because remember they're still under Rome.

Tell them to be obedient. Tell them to be ready to for every good work. Tell them to speak evil of no one. Oh, that's not to avoid quarreling.

[54 : 11] Come on now to be gentle and to show perfect courtesy toward all people. Why? Why do we have to behave ourselves like that? For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others, and hating one another.

Remember? Remember? Remember when you lived like that? By your feelings? But, also remember, when the goodness and loving kindness of God, our Savior, appeared, He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

That's what our salvation has to do with this. So that being justified by His grace, we become heirs, we become heirs, according to the hope of eternal life.

The saying is trustworthy, Titus, and I want you to insist on these things as you teach your people, insist on these things so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works.

That's what your salvation has to do with today. because you used to be what you were before you were saved. You used to be just like everybody else, hating, envious, bitter, fighting, hating, but He saved you.

[56 : 06] He washed you. He changed you. Oh, you can still go back there, can't we? We can still go back there. That's why we need reminding.

Remember, we've been saved from that to another kind of life. We're not just saved from so that now I can be whatever I want to be and however I want to do it.

I'm saved from that evil master to a good master who I want to please, who I live for. Why do we submit to rulers?

Why do we be kind to others? Because we've been saved, because before we were saved, we were hateful and foolish, but we've been delivered from that.

We do it because we've been washed and born again and renewed by the Holy Spirit. And we submit and we show kindness and we devote ourselves to good works because our Savior was laid in a manger.

[57 : 11] Because our Savior was laid in a manger. who came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Let us serve like he does. Let it be as if we were born in a manger. Because we were.

we were maybe, well, okay. Say, no, I was born in Oakland Hospital. Christ's birth is not something we just celebrate in December.

It's what we live out every day. Let us never forget that the Son of God left his throne to be laid in a feeding trough. And the first ones to hear and spread the news were simple shepherds, simple people, blue-collar workers.

Nobody's special, except they were chosen to hear it. Let us pray.

[58 : 27] Father, we thank you for your word for Luke and how he tells the story. Help us to grasp, Lord, what you have laid out for us. May it stun us again how you sent your Son.

May it stun us again that you told shepherds. And may we lay it to heart like Mary did. May this not be something we just wonder about for a few minutes on a Sunday morning, but may it be something, Father, that we treasure and that we continue to think about and reflect on and start to put the pieces together not only about who Christ is but how we live in light of it.

Change us, oh God, keep changing us. We pray in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Amen.