

A GREAT JOY FOR ALL PEOPLE

Luke 2:1-14

Key Verses 2:10-11

"But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord."

Thanks be to the Lord for the gracious study of the Christmas message. In the last lesson we learned about Mary's decision of faith for the grace and calling of God, that she accepted God's guidance for her life and decided to place herself completely at the Lord's disposal as a handmaid. Through Zechariah's song of praise, we have come to know Jesus as the power of salvation that perfectly heals all our sin wounds and restores us so that we may serve God in holiness and righteousness.

Today's lesson is about the manger work of God and the great joy of the coming of our Savior Jesus Christ. We want to reflect on why the Christmas message is a message of great joy for all people. We want to know Jesus, who is Christ and Lord, and share this good news with young people: "Behold, I proclaim great joy to you, which will be to all the people." God bless our Christmas service and give each of you the great joy of Christmas in Jesus, the Christ and Lord.

Part 1: The baby in the manger (1-7)

Let's look at verse 1: "In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world." The story of Jesus' birth begins with a commandment from the powerful Roman emperor Augustus. Augustus, who ruled from 31 B.C. to 14 A.D., was actually named Octavian and was the first sole ruler of the Roman Empire, which encompassed the entire Mediterranean region. In human terms,

Augustus was magnificent and great. Some people expected him to be a savior who would bring about a golden age. The "Pax Augusta" brought prosperity and security to the Roman Empire. But in fact it was not a kingdom of peace, but meant a lot of suffering, high taxes and numerous privations for countless people. By his command, all people in his empire had to go to their hometown to be registered in tax lists. There was no mercy. Even a highly pregnant woman had to walk the long way from Nazareth to Bethlehem, about 145 km, just to optimize the tax income in faraway Rome.

Let us read verses 6 and 7: "While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them." When Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem, the time of the birth was getting closer. Unfortunately, Joseph could not find a suitable place to stay because there was no room left in the inn. No one wanted to take care of a pregnant woman. In the end they found shelter in a small manger which was normally used as an animal stable. Jesus' birth was not a romantic affair as it is depicted in some pictures. It was a very painful affair, like any other birth. After Mary gave birth, they did not wrap the baby in purple cloths. She didn't have nice clothes, just plain diapers. They did not lay the baby in a clean crib, but in a manger that was normally used by animals.

This incident shows that Jesus came into this world in the lowliest and most fatalistic way. Although He is the Son of God, He did not come into the world in a glorious palace, but in a cold dark stable and was laid in a manger. All parents wish to prepare the best environment for their children. But the baby Jesus was born in the most fatalistic conditions, so that he could understand all fatalistic people and be a good shepherd for them.

We see here a strong contrast between the powerful Roman ruler Augustus on the throne and the little weak and helpless baby in a manger. Humanly speaking, Augustus seemed to be the ruler of the world, while Jesus was just helplessly pushed around. But the emperor and his empire have long since passed away. The baby Jesus, however, filled the whole earth and gives life to countless people to this day.

Some people envy Emperor Augustus. They want to be glorious, rich, successful and powerful. But we must know that even Augustus had to bow to the power of death in the end.

Jesus' birth in a manger shows us that God's work is a manger ministry. Jesus' life began humbly in a stable of animals and ended in the most shameful way through crucifixion. But in fact, the baby in the manger is full of God's life and gives eternal life to all who believe in him.

God does not work through glorious power or great organizations. These only force people that everything should happen according to their origination. But through the humble manger ministry, the life-giving work of God happens.

When an American missionary, Sarah Barry, slept on the ground like the Koreans and ate spicy kimchi, it looked very lowly. But through this life fellowship, she served the disciple-making work and it was full of God's life, so that through this ministry more than 3,000 missionaries were sent out. Many large churches and congregations are empty because they have lost the life of God. In

contrast, we see small UBF house churches serving the work of God with devotion and bringing forth new life. God works mightily through them, even though their giving life often causes misunderstanding, opposition and slander.

A small manger in an apartment in Bonn was full of God's life, so that young people met Jesus and began the new life with God's mission. God used the devotion of M. Peter and M. Sarah, who gave up their private lives, to raise up these young people as shepherds and Bible teachers through the spiritual life community. Now they also serve the manger ministry with devotion. The one-on-one Bible study of S. Jochen with Olaf was sometimes very laborious, but God worked through this and established Olaf as a co-worker in the gospel. The servanthood of S. Warmherz for a Bible student Wolfgang is also a manger ministry through which God is doing a life giving work. S. Peter Ryu's life fellowship with a next-generation missionary is a life-giving work of God through which God is raising up a global spiritual general.

In this Corona time, we have seen that many big events and congresses had to be cancelled. But God continues to work mightily through the manger ministry.

God has been spiritually mobilizing our next generation through GLEF and raising them as preachers and global leaders. He equipped us through the master courses for the work of spiritual revival. God gave us the vision with Ezekiel 37:10 to make young people spiritually alive and raise them up as a vast army of God through the manger ministry of making disciples. Let us love the manger ministry of God by bringing one-on-one Bible study, early morning prayer, mobilization of the next generation, and building base camps for M mission to God.

Part 2: Great joy for all the people (8-14)

Look at verses 8 and 9: "And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An

angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified." The birth of Jesus was a world event. But at first, no one took notice. However, there was a group of shepherds who were on night duty at the same time. They belonged to the lower class of society, often ignored by others. But they were people who were waiting for the Messiah. The angel of the Lord appeared to them in a bright light. The shepherds were very frightened when they saw the clarity of the Lord. The angel reassured them and said that he had a message of "great joy" for all the people. Let's read verses 10 and 11 together, "But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.""

"Behold I proclaim great joy to you." Why is the message of Jesus' birth such a great joy for all people? All people desire to experience joy. Some seek joy through worldly success, some through work or study, some through fellowship with other people such as family, boyfriend or girlfriend, others through a happy fun fellowship with alcohol or computer games. But all these joys are very short-term and cannot give people true joy. Sooner or later they must disappoint us. But the angel announced a great and true joy that would come to all the people. This is the joy that we experience only through the coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

When God created human beings, He was very pleased with His creatures and they also had true joy because they could live in the glorious paradise of God. But when people rebelled against God and fell into sin, their relationship with their Creator was destroyed. Instead of joyfully serving God, they had to live miserably under the power of sin and death. They had to labor hard in the sweat of their brow to eat three times a day and in the end become earth again from which they were taken. How miserable is the life of people under the power of sin. That is why they always try to find some little fun in the world. But Jesus gives us, the people, the

true joy because he solved our basic sin problem by his self-sacrifice and death on the cross, forgave our sins and restored our relationship with our Creator God. Now we no longer need to live a miserable life under the power of sin, but may serve our Lord in holiness and righteousness and go on pilgrimage with many sheep to His glorious heavenly kingdom.

When I was a child, there was a dream wedding in England of a beautiful young woman, Lady Diana. Everyone envied Lady Di as she rode in the magnificent carriage to Buckingham Palace. Her life seemed to be great joy. But what could not be seen in the beautiful pictures was her inner life, that in fact she did not become happy at all. Although she was living with her Prince and two capable boys, seemingly owning everything, she was not happy at all. In the end, she divorced and died in a car accident with her new lover. This story teaches us that through improved conditions there is no true happiness, no true joy.

Saul of Tarsus was a highly educated young man, established in both Greek and Jewish society. He fought with zeal against the Christians whom he hated. But although he climbed steeply up the ladder of success, he was driven only by hatred and had no joy. But after he met Jesus on the road to Damascus, his life changed 180 degrees. He accepted Jesus' lordship over his life and was changed into a missionary for the Gentiles. Although he experienced so much suffering and hardship in his missionary life, he was always full of joy. Even while in prison in Rome, he testified, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4) True joy comes from knowing and living with the grace of God in our lives.

The birth of Jesus gives true joy to all people because it is about the solution of our sin problem. The Son of God humbled Himself and came into this world to be with us the hopeless sinners, to bear our sins and save us from the curse of sin through His death on the cross and restore our relationship with our heavenly Father. Isaiah 9:6 says, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and

the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." At the birth of Jesus, the heavens opened. Jesus is our Savior and the power of salvation.

Let's read verse 11 together, "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord." In this verse, the "Savior" is the one who brings salvation and true blessedness to mankind.

In history, there have always been great people who were thought to bring salvation, such as Alexander or Napoleon. But after they satisfied their lust for power, they only brought much war and suffering upon mankind. Also Augustus could not be the salvation bringer. But Jesus is the promised savior of all men. In Matthew 1:21 the angel says, "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." Jesus has come to solve the sin problem of all people and thus open the way to eternal life for them.

"Christ" is Greek and means "the anointed one." In Hebrew he is called "Messiah." In the past, kings and priests were anointed to indicate their mission from God. Jesus is the Christ sent and anointed by God, whom God appointed to bear the sins of the world as the Lamb of God. That is why John the Baptist testified in John 1:29: "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!' Isaiah 53:5 states: 'But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.' Because Jesus paid the ransom for our sins in full, we are free from the slavery and captivity of sin. Now we may live a new life as His beloved children.

"The Lord in the City of David" means that Jesus is the rightful ruler and shepherd. In Acts 2:36 Peter said: "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and

Messiah." To receive Jesus is to change the rule in our lives. Seduced by Satan, people always try to put their own ego in the center and want to be the master of their lives themselves. Because of ego obsession, they destroy the relationship with God and with other people. But Jesus frees us from ego. The moment we accept Him as our Lord and King, the order of creation is restored in our hearts and we experience true joy and peace.

A young woman was full of rebellion for a long time. She thought that she could find true joy when she separated from her parents and church and could finally do what she wanted. But although she tried various things, she could not find true joy. But through Bible study, she heard a word from God: 1 Peter 4:13: "But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed." Through this word, she was allowed to give Jesus dominion in her life. She received great joy in Jesus, who forgave her sins and accepted her. Since then, she has always participated in the work of God with great joy.

I wanted to be the master of my own life. I rebelled against my parents and against God and wanted to find happiness in the world through achievement and recognition. But in fact, I became only a cold-hearted egoist who hurt many people around me. I did not even care for a friend who almost died of anorexia because of the psychic problems. But now Jesus has become my Lord and Christ. Because Jesus shed His blood for me, I was able to experience forgiveness of sins. Since Jesus reigns in my heart, he helped me to leave my old life and begin a new life with God's people. God raised me to be a shepherd and Bible teacher, and even made me a blessing to others.

The coming of Jesus is the message of great joy that has changed my life, which also changes the lives of students at the campus. There are many students who do not know God, therefore suffer under the power of sin and death. They can have great joy because God is revealing Himself to them in Jesus,

awakening them spiritually, even changing them into a shepherding nation for the world mission. A young man who suffers because of the father problem, may experience in Jesus the great joy because Jesus has come into this world as his Eternal Father.

accepts Jesus receives God's joy, which flows like the undercurrent of the sea in our heart. Because Jesus is the Lord and Shepherd in us, we may have true joy even in different problems at any time and share this joy with the young people.

Verse 12 says: "This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." This verse tells how Jesus accomplished the redemptive work of God. Jesus did not come glorious and glorious. He humbled Himself to the lowest level. Jesus' incarnational grace - his incarnation in a manger - is the hallmark of the Messiah. So he could be with us, sinners, and save us from sins.

Let us come to the manger of Jesus and receive Him as our Christ and Lord. Let us receive the true joy of Jesus' coming in our hearts. God grant each of you great Christmas joy.

Let us read verses 13 and 14: "Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.'" Now the multitude of the heavenly hosts also came on the scene. They could not remain silent in this situation, but praised God, saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

From a human point of view, the Jesus' birth was a pathetic and fatalistic event. But from God's point of view, Jesus' coming into the world is glory with God. Jesus glorified God by revealing God's glory, God's power, and God's saving love through His self-abasement. Here, the angels revealed the spiritual perspective for the meaning of Jesus' birth.

Moreover, the birth of Jesus is peace for the people on earth. All people long for peace. But without God, there is no true peace. As long as we fight with our own strength, we remain un-peaceful. Under the Lordship of Jesus, our Good Shepherd, we can enjoy the true peace that is higher than all reason.

Jesus came into the world as Christ and Lord in order to solve our sin problem through His self-abasement and to lead us back to the glorious Kingdom of God. The birth of Jesus is the great joy for all people. Whoever