

3. **Telling and Treasuring the Good News:**

- a. Shepherds – ¹⁵ When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds *began* saying to one another, “Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us.” ¹⁶ So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. ¹⁷ When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. ¹⁸ And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. // The shepherds *heard* and *heeded* the angel; therefore, *they went into Bethlehem and found the Christ.* Then, *rejoicing in their Savior*, they told others the good news. LET US DO THE SAME!
- b. Mary – ¹⁹ But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them. // Think about Mary: ♦Gabriel appearing to her, ♦a virgin and yet pregnant, and ♦the words of the shepherds. She took time to ponder God’s awesome work to save *her* and *all* through her child, the Christ of Christmas!

Conclusion: On this Christmas day 2011, let us ponder ♦our sin, ♦God’s loving action to save us in Christ, and ♦the HUGE DIFFERENCE that makes for us for *time* and *eternity*. Then, ***rejoicing in the Christ of Christmas***, let us proclaim the living Christ to our dying world! And all God’s people said: *Amen!*

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The *Real* Christmas Story!

Based on Luke 2:1-20 NAU

The Nativity of our Lord – 2011

December 25 → 10:00

Introduction: Dear friends, *my forever family!* We have been greatly blessed: →the Christ of Christmas *is our Savior and Brother*, →God *is our Father*, and →the Holy Spirit, who has united us to Christ, *dwells within us!* None of those great blessings would be ours without God putting on human flesh to save us from our sins! Let’s return to the Gospel of Luke:

1. **The Birth of Jesus:**

- a. God works through a government scheme – ¹ Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. ² This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. // Politician – Webster’s dictionary says the term is “frequently used in a derogatory sense, with implications of seeking personal...gain, scheming, and opportunism...” (Third College Edition, 1045) So why did Caesar Augustus call for a census? To tax the people! Nevertheless, *God worked through his scheme to fulfill the Scriptures: “But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel.”* (Micah 5:2 NAU) That One is Jesus, *the Christ of Christmas!*
- b. Christians are good citizens – ⁴ Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to

the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David,⁵ in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. // At times we may agree that the demands of our government are unfair; nevertheless, *as long as our government is not commanding us to go against God's Holy Word (Act 5:29), we are called to obey – “to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.” (Luke 20:25 NAU) Therefore, Joseph went to Bethlehem!*

- c. God's great humbleness –⁶ While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth.⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. // The child to whom Mary gave birth is †the Son of the Most High, †the king of angels, †light of light eternal, †the incarnate Deity, †Immanuel, †the heaven-born Prince of Peace, †the Sun of Righteousness, and †so much more! That is who ♦set aside the riches of heaven, ♦put on human flesh, and ♦was laid in an animal feeding trough – *all for us and our salvation!*

2. **The Shepherds and the Angels:**

- a. Shepherds –⁸ In the same region there were *some* shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. // Even though shepherds were very *lowly* and *unimportant* in the eyes of the world, *they, us, and all are important to the LORD!*
- b. Good news from one of God's messengers –⁹ And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they

were terribly frightened.¹⁰ But the angel said to them [to the shepherds],

- i. “Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; // We were all dead in our sins, but God – *in Christ* – has made the way of ♦spiritual life and ♦eternal salvation FOR EVERY SINGLE PERSON! Deserving hell, *then receiving the gift of heaven* will certainly result in great joy!
- ii. ¹¹ for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. // Imagine an utterly helpless, hopeless situation; *then BEING SAVED*; God has done that for us *in the greatest way through the Christ of Christmas!*
- iii. ¹² “This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” // So how would the shepherds know they had found the right baby – *Christ the Lord*? When they found “a baby...lying in a manger [feeding trough].”
- iv. ¹³ And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.” // So, WITH WHOM is God pleased? Dr. Just answered: “...those who receive the news of the child's birth in faith. These are the ‘men of his favor,’ those on whom God's favor rests.” (111) Unless GOD enables people to truly see their lost and helpless condition, they will have no genuine interest in the Christ of Christmas. Therefore, since God has ♦opened our eyes and ♦saved us through Christ, let us give Him thanks!