December 24, 2023 **BIRTHING A PROMISE**

The gospel reading from St. Luke 2:1-20, tells us in the first few verses that throughout the Roman Empire people were commanded to return to their ancestral homes to register for the census. Joseph, who was a descendant of King David, took his fiancée Mary, who was pregnant and nearing delivery, and made the long journey back to Bethlehem. It was evident that as thousands of people were traveling for the same reason there was no room for them when they arrived at their hometown. After a week of walking and riding, Joseph and Mary experienced the same thing of not finding a place to stay. Having been turned into a stable, Mary gave birth to Jesus, wrapped him in strips of cloth and laid Him in a manger.

While this was going on, the angels appeared to the shepherds and told them the good news. It was then that the angels broke out in song giving glory to God. The angels told the shepherds that the Savior had been born. They told the shepherds where He was and what to look for when they got to the town. When the angels were gone, the shepherds went into Bethlehem to see for themselves what the angels had said. For hundreds of years this event had been foretold, and now it was taking place before their very eyes. The Shepherds told everyone what they saw, spreading the wonder concerning the news of a Savior. Many wonderful things happened on that night when Christ was born.

**First: The Birth of Christ Resulted in Praise:** Christ birth made the angels sing great praises, in the plain, to the shepherds. Luke 2 tells us that after the shepherds raced to town and saw for themselves the things the angels said, they too left the stable praising God. Imagine the scene with me as these men left that place with great joy in their hearts, knowing they had just seen the salvation of Israel, the Promised Messiah, and the King of kings before their very eyes! They told everyone what they saw.

Let us understand why praise is so important in our life, and why the absence of it ought to be an alarm to us. We all praise what we delight in and enjoy. We praise and communicate to others our love for them because we delight in them. The birth of Christ resulted in great praise from everyone involved because they delighted in the news they heard and the baby they saw. When the angels, shepherds and wise men got a glimpse of the hand of God at work in their midst they rejoiced and praised God.

**Second:** **The Birth of Christ Resulted in Great News**: Verses 10-11 reads, “And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.”

The words “good tidings” mean good news. They brought good news of great joy. It was great joy because it had been long anticipated. It was great joy because this was the Messiah and the Savior. He was finally here! The great joy didn’t end with that. It had to do with the grace and love He would give to all who called on Him as their Lord and Savior. It brings us great joy to know that the all-powerful and all-knowing and omnipresent God of the universe was born into this world for you and me!

Not only was there good news of great joy, but this was good news concerning “Peace”. The angel said in verse 14, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” In Isaiah 9:6, it was prophesied that a child would be born, “and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.” We got to share this great good news with others.

If you like to experience the joy of Christmas please join us in our Sunday worship on December 24, 2023, either at 11:00 AM or at 8:00 PM during Christmas Eve Candlelight Service.

Peace and have a Blessed Christmas.

Rev. Dr. Christopher Ponnuraj

Minister