

The Wonder of Christ's Birth

by Erlo Stegen

The sermon highlights the significance of Jesus' birth and the importance of sharing the gospel with others.

Duration: 1:19:10

Scripture: Luke 2:1-20

Topics: "Birth Of Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher tells a story about an old man and his grandson riding a donkey. They encounter different people who criticize their choices, leading them to constantly change their actions. The preacher then wakes up from a dream and hears a choir singing Christmas carols, which fills him with joy. The sermon emphasizes the importance of the birth of Jesus as the Savior and the need to share this message with others.

Transcript

Let's pray. We invite you, Lord of Lords, to be in our midst. Touch each and every heart in our midst.

Work in a marvelous way, your word reaching the depths of our hearts. Work, Lord, in an amazing way. Amen.

We find our text for today in Luke chapter 2. Luke 2, chapter from the first verse. We'll read quite a few verses. 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 time 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 child. 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 manger 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 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 day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord. For this will be a sign for you, you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.

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 with whom he is pleased. When the angels went away from the city of David, they saw that there was no place for them in the city of David. 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 lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that which 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 when the angels went away from the city of David, they saw that there was no place for them in the city of David. And when the angels went away from them into heaven, they saw that there was no place for them in the city of David.

When Adam and Eve sinned, they were expelled from the garden and cherubim were placed there at the gates with fiery cherubim and swords to prevent them from entering in again. For when he had been working among the Savi, he had taken the Gospel of Matthew and read it to them and tried to explain it. But when they got to the place, when he got to that story of Judas Iscariot betraying the Lord Jesus, they all clapped their hands and cheered.

Judas' betrayal of Jesus. He asked, why do you clap your hands? They said, well, obviously, Judas is the hero of the story. He was so intelligent that he was able to outwit Jesus.

He said, well, obviously, Judas is the hero of the story. He was so intelligent that he was able to outwit Jesus. So he was deeply disappointed that at this serious point of the betrayal of Jesus, they actually cheered the betrayer.

His quandary was, how do I reach these people with the Gospel? Because for that tribe to betray somebody and outwit them, that was a true hero. Then he prayed, asking the Lord for wisdom, how he should reach these people who seem so close to the Gospel. Now, the tribes there were at war constantly, and should they be the victors, they would have lots of flesh.

They would have lots of flesh. They would have lots of flesh. But then one day, he observed that after this battle, the king went to the king of the opposing tribe.

He came with his own son, and he presented him, he gave him over. He asked, what has happened here? And they explained to him, well, this is the peace child. They won't be at war again.

They will not have friction. For the king has been willing to sacrifice his own son, he's given his own son to the enemy. And that child was named the peace child.

It was the peace bringer. Then he says, Then he said, Lord, I thank you. Now you've opened the way.

And so he took this cultural event, and he went back to the tribe, and he said, now this is what the Gospel is. Just as you have been at war, but the peace child brings peace, so to God the Father, though we were

his enemies, he gave his very own begotten son as his peace child. Then they said, Then they said, we understand now.

So this is the Gospel you're trying to tell us, that God gave his son. So God giving his own son, that is the real heart of the Gospel. But let us return to our text.

That a decree went out in those days from Caesar Augustus that everyone should be registered. Now rulers of the earth, kings like to know how many people they have in their kingdom. But it wasn't just a census of people that should be registered, but also they had to register their property, what they owned, their animals, their homes, so that they should be able, the king or the emperor could tax them, because kings like tax.

On the one hand, it is understandable and good. Roads need to be built, there needs to be infrastructure and hospitals, etc. But nevertheless, there is the bad side.

The other side is that they take it more than necessary, so that they should put it in their own pockets, and there is corruption as we know. By this time, Mary was expecting, and it was drawing closer to the time of birth. And at this very moment, there was this decree, the announcement of a poll or a registration, and should you not obey, you would be food for the birds.

Rome, and especially the palace of the emperor, was full of glitter and glam. Even the palace was made with gold. I've got something in my ear that doesn't work too well.

I've got something in my ear that doesn't work too well. Now, just as I need to go to Durban to a specialist for this hearing aid to be able to fix it up, a technician who knows what he's doing, so do you. If you've got something wrong in your life, you need to go to the specialist, the one who can help you to fix your life.

Back to Rome, there were thousands upon thousands of soldiers and officers. Now, Caesar Augustus was a pagan among pagans. He knew nothing of the word of the Lord and of God and of Jesus Christ, the scriptures.

So one day, from his desk, there was a decree that was signed by him, or there was the seal, that every single person was to be counted in the whole empire. Even the Jews and those in Israel had to go back to the town of their birth. Now, just as Mary and Joseph, their town of birth being Bethlehem, they had to return to it for registration.

Quite a distance. And it was far away, 20 to 25 hours of walking it would take. There was no way out for them.

They had to obey this law, and so they had to go to Bethlehem. There were no taxis for them. They had to go by foot up and down hills.

The people of the day said, this is an awful decree. They looked at it from a human point of view and not from God's point of view. For the child in Mary had to be born in Bethlehem, not in Nazareth.

As the word says in Micah chapter 5, You, O Bethlehem, you who are but little in Judah, You who are but little in Judah, You who are but little in Judah, From you shall come forth for me, one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from old, from ancient days. Jesus had to be born. Had to be born in Bethlehem.

Otherwise, what the prophets, what the scriptures said would turn out to be lies. So they travelled this long distance till they arrived there. But once they had arrived, they were told there was no space, no accommodation.

So they were troubled. Now tell me, what do you think was the reason why they didn't get accommodation? Maybe you would say there were too many people there. Or, I don't agree.

You see, Mary and Joseph were extremely poor. And so when Mary came in her condition, they said there is no room, for they were just of low caste, unknown nothings. But they were given a place down there underneath where there was a stable for animals.

When they arrived there, they were told there was no place for them, no place for them to rest, no place for them to eat, no place for them to sleep. They were told there was no place for them, no place for them to rest, no place for them to eat, no place for them to sleep. Had they arrived, however, with royal looking white horses and a whole security entourage, they would have been welcomed.

Room would have been found for them, but no, they were told there is no room, down there you go. James, the brother of Jesus. James says in his letter that when a poor person comes, and he sits down, if a richer person comes, the poor man is shoved to one side, told to go to a more insignificant place, and the rich man given the most prominent place.

That's what we are like, we people in this world, with Satan in our hearts. But this didn't trouble Mary and Joseph, when they were in that place and the child was born, for them it felt like they were in heaven. A person of the world seeks the things of the world, but a person who is heavenly, he is fully satisfied with the things of heaven.

For they could gaze upon this child, and as she nursed him, they were not put off by the donkeys and cows and oxen and sheep, not at all. The Lord The Lord, when he was in his temple, it says it was filled with his glory and the angels shouted, holy, holy, holy. And this is the same Lord who is now born.

His first smell is one of cow dung and of sheep dung, but he is Lord of lords, and he is king over all. Why? For you. Mary and Joseph Though they were shoved to one corner, they were perfectly happy there.

They were perfectly content because they had the Lord Jesus. The same is with us. If we truly have him, if Jesus is in the heart, we have everything.

The thing is, we human beings get things the wrong way around. We put the cart before the horse. There is perfect contentment with the one who has Jesus, whether he is recognized or not, whether he has position or not, whether he is wealthy or not, it doesn't matter so long as he has Jesus.

Things change when you have Jesus. All your pride vanishes. The thoughts that you were something, that you were important, goes.

It vanishes. They asked me to pray to give thanks. Now we've looked at Bethlehem.

We've looked at Rome. Let's go to heaven now. When Jesus was born, All of heaven was shaken.

The myriads of millions of angels were so astonished, they said, let's go to earth to see this thing. And so they came as the hosts of heaven. I don't know if there was even an angel there.

I don't know if there was even an angel left in heaven. They all wanted to be there where Jesus was born. We people like to ascend to heaven, but these angels left heaven.

They wanted to be there where Jesus was. And all the hosts were there and appeared and the shepherds were terror struck. Frightened, seeing this astonishing sight.

Now the owners of the sheep were in their homes. The ones who were the shepherds, they were simply the laborers out there. And you'd find that they were being looked after.

Like you find that they need to be looked after here in South Africa, otherwise they would disappear. Not like in overseas countries, they would be safe. The flock wandering around.

In winter, it would be very cold. Even snow sometimes. My brothers just phoned me there in Switzerland holding services.

He said, many couldn't come because it is just white with snow. It is so ice cold, many are simply tuning in to listen on radio to the live broadcast. And so the cars, everything, are covered with snow and ice.

Speaking in Swahili. Speaking in Swahili. And so these simple laborers, these shepherds, they were the ones who had the privilege of all the angels announcing the good news that Christ was born to them.

They were the privileged ones. The great shall be the least. The least shall be the greatest in heaven.

It was an amazing event. Speaking in Swahili. And though frightened, the angels said, do not fear, for we bring you the glad tidings that the Christ has been born, the Messiah has come.

And so he brings salvation to you and to all the world. Speaking in Swahili. Salvation has come.

Remember there in Adam and Eve's paradise, the doors were closed, they could not enter. But now, on this day, the doors are open. Speaking in Swahili.

For unto you, the child is born, the Redeemer. How marvelous it was. A certain preacher in America, in Philadelphia, after preaching, a certain visitor, a stranger, came to the preacher saying, you know, I didn't really appreciate the way that you preached.

Because we preachers are believed by many. I remember being in Lausanne. After the service, two ladies came.

Saying, we did not enjoy the service. You were shouting, we had to put our fingers in our ears. Can't you just speak normally? Why do you shout so much? I humbly, in honoring them, I said, thank you for the advice.

But the next day in the service, I preached with a very soft voice. They came to me again. And they said, tell us, what's wrong? Are you ill? I said, why? Now, they said, you know, we thought maybe you're depressed that you speak in such a soft voice.

I said, well, look, you are the cause. You're the ones who said that I shouldn't speak so loudly. So I did it.

Well, that was the end of listening to women who tell me that they don't like the preaching. People are like that. They easily criticize.

It is said in Germany, an old man was walking. He got onto a donkey with his grandson who was walking. A person came by.

The story goes that a person then rebuked the old man on the donkey and saying, why do you have the privilege to ride and your poor grandson has to walk? He got down, put the child onto the donkey, and so they walked again. Then another person came. The child didn't want to walk.

He said, what? He said, what? You child have you no respect? Have you got no brains in your head that you make an old, respectable man have to walk? The old man Didn't know what to do, so he got onto the donkey with his grandson, both of them. Then another man came along, and said the poor donkey, how can you do this? How can you do this to this creature? Have you got no feelings for the poor donkey? And so they both got off then. So the old man, then, the old man, said to his grandson, now you stand on that side of the donkey, I'll stand on this side, and we will carry the donkey.

You see, if you listen to people all the time, you will be driven to do silly things. Now the preacher in Philadelphia in America, the stranger came to him after the service, said I'm exhausted hearing about the cross. All you speak about is the cross.

And they suggested it would be better. Don't just speak about the death, the crucifixion. Why don't you just speak about him as the teacher, his good teachings, not just about Christ dying on the cross.

He then replied to this person, look, if I only teach, speak about Jesus as the teacher, will you obey what he said as a teacher? The person said most definitely yes. Then the preacher said now, firstly, Jesus never sinned. And he says to you, do not sin, now tell me, can you keep that? The person said, well, I don't know, I doubt it.

But I'm a sinner after all. Then he said, now you see, it does not help to only speak about Jesus as the teacher. I need to also present him as the savior, the one who saves you from your sins.

Now, what a great honor, the greatest of honors that the hosts of heaven should announce this to the shepherds and that they should sing this song. What a privilege it will be one day to hear them in heaven. Now, actually, the original text does not say that they sing.

It says the hosts said, they spoke. This host, this host of heaven then spoke the praises of God, glory to God in the highest and peace on earth and goodwill to all men. The heavenly praise.

Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth and goodwill to all men. The song that the shepherds had the privilege to hear, blessed are those who die, who die in the Lord to quickly hear that choir again. Let's get back to it.

The time is going on. Let's go and look at heaven. And from heaven, let's now look again at Bethlehem.

The shepherds then said to one another, after the hosts of heaven singing or praising and saying the song had gone, they said, come, let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has been told us. And they didn't walk slowly. They went with haste to go and see this marvel that they had been told about.

Not like the Pharisees and scribes and Sadducees there in Jerusalem. Who, when Herod called them all together and said, where will this king be born? They said, he'll be born in Bethlehem. Knowing the truth, but not one of them went to Bethlehem.

They knew it in their heads, but not one of them took a step and went there. What does that mean? Nothing else. Then that you are a NPA signboard next to the road.

It says, Stanger they, so many kilometers, Greytown they, Durban they. But that board doesn't go there. It just stands where it is.

Many people, I don't know how many here amongst us, are the same. They know it, but they don't take a step concerning it. They don't go to see.

Greytown. But the shepherds went with haste. They went in a hurry as quick as possible to go and see the Christ child in Bethlehem.

I wonder whether you are like them. So for your own salvation sake, don't stand like a road board. Just pointing to the right direction.

But you don't take a step to go there. You can say you're a person, but you're as dead as the signboard, as a piece of wood to be eaten by ants. So they went in haste and they found it to be exactly as they were told.

There was the child wrapped in swaddling clothes in a manger. There was Mary. There was Joseph.

Then they could say, indeed, it is true what the angels said, that for us, the Savior, the Messiah has been born. And then they went back, but not to the flock, but rather home after home. They went and told what they had experienced.

They shared this good news about the Savior who had been born. It's getting late. It's an hour and a half now into the message.

We need to leave it. But let me ask you this. When the shepherds then experienced this seeing the Christ child, they could not keep quiet.

They went to house after house telling the good news. Is this not the greatest story ever told that to us has been born the Savior, the Messiah, the Redeemer, the one who saves us and forgives us our sins. If you keep quiet with this message, you are accursed.

If you've seen Jesus, you cannot keep quiet about him. You are lying if you say that you've met him. Your faith is dead.

So let me close now with this story. Certain preacher was preparing his Christmas sermon. While he was preparing it, he fell asleep.

And he dreamt a dream that he was in a land where the people didn't know the Lord Jesus. As he walked down the streets, there wasn't a single church he saw, not a single steeple. And then he noticed a little child who came to him saying, please come to my mother.

She's ill. Come and help her. When he took his Bible, he noticed that it ended at Malachi.

There was no New Testament. All that pertains to Jesus born as the Savior, all of the gospels were absent. He bowed his head and cried like a little child.

He wept in bitter despair because he could offer her no hope beyond the grave. And at that moment, the preacher awoke from his dream, from his sleep. And he heard a choir singing with great enthusiasm, Christmas carols.

Joy filled his heart. And his soul, as never before. And they sang, joy to the world, the Lord has come.

If you claim that you're a Christian, but you keep quiet. And this joy is not in your life. And you can't share it with other people that are on their way to hell.

Let me tell you that you know it from today. You're a liar. And you know not a real Christian.

You've got to be born again. You've got to be changed. You've got to meet with Jesus.

He's here, but not there. As standards. That this word, this message would not be in vain.

Let these words reach the very depths of our hearts. Changing us. As you change those shepherds.

So that we cannot keep quiet about this. So that we would go into homes. Go into homes proclaiming that the Messiah, the Savior has been born.

He is the one who forgives and sets free from sin. Amen.

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