THE BABY JESUS IS CHRIST THE LORD

Luke 2:1-14
Key Verse: 2:11

“Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.”

John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” The eternal power of the Bible is expressed through this one simple message, “God loves us.” God’s love takes many forms. For example, a young man asked my sister-in-law for her hand in marriage. When she agreed, he joyously exclaimed to everyone he met, “Now I know that God exists.” It meant, “I know that God loves me.” What a beautiful story it is! What a hopeful story it is for many young men and women. But, it is not universal. Therefore, it cannot be the true expression of God’s love for the world. In fact, there is only one story that fully expresses the width and height and depth and length of God’s love; it is the story of how God sent the baby Jesus into this world to be Christ the Lord. The Christmas holiday exists so that at least once a year, the whole world might hear the full story of God’s love, and our hearts might be opened newly to receive the baby Jesus as our Lord and Christ. May God bless us through this Christmas worship service to repent and believe the good news of great joy that is for all the people.

Part I. The baby Jesus is God’s tender mercy to the humble

First, Caesar’s world. In the days of the birth of the baby Jesus, there was one super power nation, Rome. The Roman emperor, Caesar Augustus, ruled under the slogan “Pax Romana,” that is “Roman peace,” for Roman rule brought better roads, better water, better commerce. Today, that slogan might be expressed as “Globalization.” But for the colonial peoples, “Roman peace” meant oppression. Roman Globalization looked like an excuse to hoard the wealth of all nations. From time to time, Caesar ordered a census of the more than 4 million subjects of the empire. It was to glorify himself. It also enabled him to
collect a head tax. Caesar called himself, “Divine.” But his decrees arbitrarily disrupted countless lives. Look at verses 1-3. “In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world.... And everyone went to his own town to register.” Angrily or resignedly, ordinary people had to trudge for miles in order to be counted in Caesar's world.

Second, true romance. In spite of the humiliation of this forced march, Joseph and Mary, the human parents of Jesus, could maintain a beautiful romance. It shows that they were living not in Caesar's world, but in God's world. Look at verses 4-5. Joseph was a carpenter by trade, but he belonged to the house and line of king David, the one to whom God had promised, “your throne will be established forever” (2 Sa 7:16b). Mary was a young girl, a virgin, who had been pledged to marry Joseph, but was now in the ninth month of her pregnancy. The angel Gabriel had announced to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus” (Lk 1:30b-31). The news that Mary should bear a child before marriage surely crushed her dream of a happy life with Joseph. But the angel Gabriel gave her a new and better dream. He said to her, “Your son will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end” (Lk 1:32-33). Mary really wanted to enjoy the love of her fiancé, Joe. But Mary trusted even more in God's love. When the angel convinced her that the child would be conceived through the power of the Holy Spirit, Mary humbled herself and said, “I am the Lord’s servant. May it be to me as you have said” (Lk 1:38).

When Joseph discovered his fiancée's condition, he didn't think about himself. In order to protect Mary from public shame and disgrace, he sought to release her from the oath she had made, secretly. But the angel Gabriel came to him in a vision and told him, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 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” (Matt 1:20-21). What man could overcome his feelings and accept Mary as she was? But immediately after having
the dream Joseph went and confessed his love to Mary, shedding many tears. It was not because Mary was more beautiful than Cleopatra. It was because, when Joseph curbed his pride before the authority and promise of God, divine love for Mary filled his heart.

Third, God's tender mercy. So, Joseph and Mary were together on the journey back to Bethlehem to register for the census. They were happy, though they had no money for a room at the inn. Mary even sang in her heart, “My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed” (Lk 1:46b-48). Let's read together verses 6-7. “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 room for them in the inn.” Wow! Their condition was so miserable! But they looked so beautiful, surrounding their newborn boy in his bed of straw! All around them was darkness, greed and oppression. But they were living under God's tender mercy. God's love was shining from within, giving them strength that overcame the adverse situation. Most of all, God's eternal promise to save his people from their sins was keeping them safely on their pilgrimage toward his kingdom. The miracle of Christmas night is that promise was now alive in the baby Jesus.

God gave the country girl Mary a vision of how God’s mercy is revealed in history. Luke 1:50-52 says, “His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.” Luke the historian presents a contrast between the worldly power of Caesar, and the divine majesty of God, revealed to mankind through the baby Jesus in the manger. In his own words, Caesar “subjected the whole wide earth to the rule of the Roman people.” Now, only a few aqueducts and other ruins are remaining. On the other hand, the manger of the baby Jesus looked so small. But he administers tender mercy through the forgiveness of sins to everyone who believes in him as their Savior. Therefore, his kingdom is ever growing, heart by heart. His kingdom will never end!
Just as there are two kingdoms, there are two kinds of people in the world. One kind is proud. They can achieve worldly success for a time. But they cannot enjoy it for long, for they live in Caesar’s world – a merciless world of decay. God’s hope for them is that when they are brought low, they will turn to him to be healed. The other kind is humble. They acknowledge the authority of God’s word over their human desires. To godless men, they look like people waiting at a bus stop for a bus that isn’t coming. But even as they are waiting, they have joy and peace, for they are living under God's tender mercy, and they know that their destination is the heavenly kingdom. It is true. For example, one woman we know never married or had children. Instead, she humbly gave her life to serve Korean students in obedience to God’s word. As a result, she bore innumerable spiritual children in Korea and then in the USA. And because she fears God, she is not afraid of anything else, not even to ride elephants in Indonesia. She can labor night and day in his service, because she is looking forward to a glorious rest in the heavenly kingdom. This is the promise of God: “His mercy extends to those who fear him.” We must be those who are humble. We must be those who believe the promise of God. We must know that the baby Jesus is God’s tender mercy for the humble.

Part II. The baby Jesus is the horn of salvation for those who believe

The baby Jesus was born in an animal’s stable and lying in a manger. 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.” God chose lowly shepherds as his witnesses to the birth of his Son Jesus. Why? I don’t know! Whatever the reason, when the angel came to tell them the news, they were terrified. Maybe, like boy David, the shepherds had fought off lions and bears with their bare hands. However, now they were fearful, thinking that this very night they should answer for their lives. But the angel said in verses 10b-11, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.” According to the angel’s message, the shepherds didn’t have to be afraid anymore. Instead,
they could sing in a joyful chorus with Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist: “Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David” (Lk 1:68-69). The baby Jesus is the horn of salvation. Let's think about how the horn of salvation, Jesus, saves us from all our fears.

First, a reason to fear. In the Bible, horns represent power. Most often, they represent the power of God’s enemies. Psalm 75:4 says, “To the arrogant I say, ‘Boast no more,’ and to the wicked, ‘Do not lift up your horns.’” In Daniel 7, the most terrifying beast in Daniel’s dream represented the Roman Empire. This beast had iron teeth that crushed and devoured its victims. Even more frightening were the 10 horns on its head. Later, in Revelation, this beast was shown to be the devil himself. In short, the power of Satan is in his 10 horns, which are lifted up against God in his arrogance and used to torment God’s creation, man. One horn is like that of a charging bull. Another -- like an irresistible pressure. No man can thwart the power of the ten horns of Satan.

When the horn of Satan pierces our hearts, the poison of sin makes it a fatal blow. James 1:15 says, “Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.” Living in this world, we are all wrestling against the power of sin in our lives (Ge. 4:7). If we give up or give in, the sentence is unavoidable: death. One young man struggled against immoral desires for a time. Then he thought, “Life will be easier if I just give in.” Later, he committed suicide because of his nagging conscience. One young Muslim man could not cleanse his conscience from sin. His wife suggested that he go, join the jihad, and die a martyr. He ended up in the hospital. He said, “At first, killing was hard. But then I couldn’t get enough of the blood of infidels.” Satan’s horns are enough to bring the whole world under the power of sin and death.

Second, the horn of salvation. If there were only the horn of Satan in the world, life itself would be unbearable. And after death, there would only be inevitable judgment for our sins. But the Bible speaks of another horn, the horn of salvation. The horn of salvation is the power
of God to save his people from their enemies. In order to save his people Israel, God raised up David, saying, “My faithful love will be with him, and through my name his horn will be exalted” (Ps. 89:24). With God’s help, David established the united, theocratic kingdom of Israel. David’s descendants were not faithful to maintain God’s blessing, but God remembered his promise to David. God raised up the baby Jesus as the horn of salvation for his people. Luke 1:72b-75 says, “...to remember his holy covenant... to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness all our days.” The horn of salvation, Jesus, defeats the horn of Satan, setting free everyone who believes from the power of sin. The horn of salvation Jesus rescues us from all our fears, especially the fear of death. The horn of salvation Jesus enables us to serve God in holiness and righteousness all our lifetime. The horn of salvation Jesus guides our feet into the path of peace, so that we may enter our heavenly rest. Let’s read verses 10 and 11. “But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.’”

One young girl really wanted to be a rock star diva. But when her father became abusive, her parents divorced. Then Satan’s horn impaled her, and she despaired. She stopped eating and became a mental patient, until she came to Bible study and heard Jesus’ divine command, “Get up and walk” (Jn 5:8b). The horn of salvation Jesus took away her despair, and convinced her that she is a precious daughter of God. Now she takes care of God’s sheep so tenderly and prays for America to become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

One young man was a proud graduate student. When he went to Russia to study for a summer, he tried with noble intentions to rescue a homeless woman. But she was smarter than he and trapped him. Then, the horn of Satan pierced his conscience. He lost all confidence and became a street bum, until God gave him Romans 8:1, “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” The horn of salvation Jesus freed him from Satan’s grip and enabled him to serve God without fear as a husband, father and professor shepherd for American college students. In a fearsome world where Satan’s
horns are threatening, the horn of salvation Jesus is the good news of great joy for all people!

Part III. The baby Jesus is Christ the Lord

First, the baby Jesus came as the Lamb of God. Look at verse 12. “This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” Only the poorest of babies could ever be found in a manger, an animal’s feedbox. Yet this child is the Son of God. It is the sign that the baby Jesus did not come into the world to receive human glory or praise. Instead, he was destined to receive the worst things that the world had to offer: sorrows, suffering, shame, mocking, beatings and finally death on a cross. Why? Why would the Son of God come down to this world in order to suffer so much at the hands of sinners? The prophet Isaiah cried at God’s plan for his Son. “Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa 53:4-6). John the Baptist understood God’s holy will for his Son Jesus, and cried out, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn 1:29). Apostle Peter was a self-reliant man. Later, he could only marvel at what his master Jesus had done for him: “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed” (1 Pe 2:24). Precious Jesus! Precious Lamb of God who came down to this world as a baby lying in a manger! Thank you, Lord Jesus, for bearing my sins in your body on the tree! Thank you that your cross heals all people of every nation, when they repent and believe the good news.

Second, the baby Jesus is glory to God and peace to men. The good news of great joy was pouring out of the heavenly realms on the night of Jesus’ birth. A heavenly chorus began to sing, “Glory to God, glory to God in the highest! And peace on earth.” Let’s read v. 13-14 together. “Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.” The baby Jesus in swaddling clothes is glory to God. When sin came into the world, two things happened. Man lost the right view of his Creator God. He did not glorify God as God in his heart. Instead, man became groundlessly proud, trying to obtain God's glory and honor for himself, like Caesar on the throne. Engaged in a futile battle with God, man lost all peace. God could have judged man who had rebelled against him. Instead, God humbled himself and came to earth in the form of a baby in a manger, so that anyone could come to him for the forgiveness of his sins, be healed, and receive a living hope in the kingdom of God. What kind of God is this, who does not condemn us for our sins, but crushes his own Son in our places? He is the God of love. He is the God of glory. He is the Almighty God who does not use his almighty power to destroy sinners, but saves them in love. The baby Jesus is glory to God, and so, he restores true peace to those who believe.

Third, the baby Jesus is Christ the Lord. Let’s read verse 11 once more. “Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.” The title, “Christ”, means “Anointed One,” for the baby Jesus was chosen by God before the Creation to be the Savior of the world. “Lord” means he is our King. But he is not a worldly king, like Caesar. Our King Jesus gave his life on the cross to free us from condemnation. Our King Jesus rose again from the dead to give us victory over the power of sin and death. Our King Jesus is a king of peace and love. His kingdom will never end. If we confess allegiance to the world, that is, to money, Caesar is our king, and Satan is poised to impale us with his horns. It is a life that leads only to death. But if we confess our faith in Jesus as Christ and Lord, then we are saved from the power of Satan, and we can serve God in holiness and righteousness all our days. Finally, we will walk through the pearly gates into his heavenly kingdom. Therefore, we must all make a choice. Don't live anymore in terror of the horn of Satan or the poison of sin. Come and receive the tender mercy of our God! Come and receive the baby Jesus as Christ the Lord!

In the New Year, let us care for Jesus’ sheep with tender mercy. Let us proclaim the good news of his kingdom and righteousness to the ends of the earth. May God richly bless you to do so.