



MINISTRIES

A Ministry of the Athens Universal Life Church
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<https://aulc.us>

Title: "The Greatest Gift: Christ's Birth and Its Relevance Today"

Good morning! Today, we gather to celebrate a story so familiar, yet so profound: the birth of Jesus Christ. In Luke chapter 2, verses 1 to 20, we see not only a historical event but a divine orchestration that speaks to every heart in every age. This morning, let's explore the message of Christ's birth through three lenses: humility, joy, and action. To make this message resonate, I will share three illustrations from today's world.,,,

Starting at Luke chapter 2, verse 1:,,,

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole empire should be registered.

This first registration took place while Quirinius was governing Syria.

So everyone went to be registered, each to his own town.

And Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family line of David,

to be registered along with Mary, who was engaged to him and was pregnant.

While they were there, the time came for her to give birth.

Then she gave birth to her firstborn Son, and she wrapped Him snugly in cloth and laid Him in a feeding trough—because there was no room for them at the lodging place.

In the same region, shepherds were staying out in the fields and keeping watch at night over their flock.

Then an angel of the Lord stood before[e] them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

But the angel said to them, “Don’t be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people:

Today a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord, was born for you in the city of David.

This will be the sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in cloth and lying in a feeding trough.”

Suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying:

Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and peace on earth to people He favors!

When the angels had left them and returned to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go straight to Bethlehem and see what has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.”

They hurried off and found both Mary and Joseph, and the baby who was lying in the feeding trough.

After seeing them, they reported the message they were told about this child,

and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.

But Mary was treasuring up all these things in her heart and meditating on them.

The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had seen and heard, just as they had been told.,,,

-- May the Lord add His Blessing to the reading of His Word!,,,

-- Hello, I am Doctor Rob White with the A U L C Ministries with our message this week.,,,

-- I am happy that you can take a few minutes out of your busy week to be with us today!

The Son of God was born not in a palace but in a manger. The King of Kings, who could have demanded splendor, chose simplicity. This humble birth echoes God’s heart for the marginalized and forgotten.,,,

"Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered" (Luke 2:1),,,

Luke begins the birth story by placing it in the context of a Roman census. Augustus, the emperor who claimed to have brought peace to the world through the Pax Romana, unknowingly serves as a tool in God’s plan. His decree sends Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, fulfilling the prophecy in Micah chapter 5 verse 2:,, **"But you, Bethlehem... out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel."** ,,,

It’s ironic that the emperor who was revered as the savior of the Roman world is remembered today primarily because of his mention in this passage. Augustus ruled in splendor in Rome, yet the true Savior of the world entered as a child born in a stable in an obscure corner of the empire.,,,

This contrast between Augustus and Jesus reminds us of the way God works through history. While human leaders and powers seek to control events, it is ultimately God who directs them to fulfill His purposes.,,,

Think about organizations like Habitat for Humanity. They provide shelter to those in need, a tangible reminder that every life is valuable. Just as Jesus was born in a borrowed stable, these efforts show us that God often works through humble means to bring hope and dignity.,,,

In a world obsessed with status and wealth, Christ's birth challenges us to prioritize humility. How can we reflect this humility in our daily lives? Perhaps it's as simple as giving generously to someone in need or valuing relationships over material possessions.,,,

This reminds us that God is always in control, even when circumstances seem chaotic or driven by worldly powers. From Augustus to modern leaders, history unfolds under God's guidance. The events of your life, too, are not random. God can use even the smallest details or the most unexpected situations to bring about His plans for good. ,,,

Take comfort in knowing that God's hand is at work in history and in your life. Trust Him, especially in uncertain times, knowing that He is weaving a tapestry of redemption and purpose. ,,,

"She gave birth to her firstborn son, wrapped him in cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7).,,,

The birth of Jesus is marked by simplicity and humility. Mary and Joseph, far from home, find no suitable lodging and must settle in a place meant for animals. The feeding trough becomes the cradle for the Savior of the world.,,,

Luke emphasizes the manger three times in this passage ,(as we see in verses 7, 12 and 16), making it a central sign of Jesus' birth. This detail is not just a setting; it is a profound statement. The King of Kings begins His earthly life in the most unassuming of circumstances, surrounded by poverty and vulnerability.,,,

The humility of Christ's birth is one of the most profound aspects of the Christmas story. Jesus, the Son of God, the Creator of the universe, entered the world not in a palace but in a stable. His first bed was a feeding trough. The word used for "inn" in this passage, **kataluma**, likely refers to a guest room in a private home rather than a public inn. Mary and Joseph were not rejected by an innkeeper; instead, they found themselves in a crowded home where the only available space was the area shared with animals.,,,

The feeding trough, a symbol of humility, becomes the sign that confirms the angels' announcement to the shepherds.,,,

The angel's message to the shepherds was, "I bring you good news of great joy for all the people." These shepherds, considered lowly and insignificant, were the first to hear about Christ's birth.,,,

Recently, a janitor at a school was gifted a new car by the students and staff who recognized his dedication. The joy on his face mirrored the shepherds' reaction: amazement that he, someone overlooked by society, was celebrated.,,,

This humble beginning points to the nature of Christ's mission. He came not to exalt Himself but to serve, to identify with the poor and the marginalized. His birth in a manger foreshadows the life He would lead—a life without privilege or earthly riches, but filled with grace and truth. ,,,

The joy of Christmas isn't confined to the season. It's in recognizing God's presence in unexpected places and sharing that joy with others. Who in your life needs encouragement today? A kind word or thoughtful gesture can spread the joy of Christ.,,,

The shepherds' inclusion in the story reveals the radical inclusivity of the Gospel. God chooses the overlooked and ordinary to be the first witnesses to His Son's birth. This speaks to the nature of God's kingdom—it is not reserved for the powerful or privileged but is open to all who are willing to receive it.,,,

Consider the shepherds' faith. They acted immediately, leaving their flocks to find the Savior. Are there areas in your life where God is calling you to respond in faith and obedience?,,,

"The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen" (Luke 2:20),,,

The shepherds, lowly and marginalized, were chosen as the first witnesses to the Savior's birth. They didn't just hear the angels' announcement—they acted on it. They went to Bethlehem, saw the Christ child, and shared the good news with everyone they encountered.,,,

Imagine tossing a pebble into a still pond. The ripples spread outward, reaching places far beyond the initial splash. The shepherds' simple act of obedience created ripples that have reached us today through the Gospel.,,,

Shepherds, considered lowly and unclean by societal standards, are the first to receive the announcement of Jesus' birth. An angel of the Lord appears to them, and the glory of the Lord surrounds them. Their initial fear turns to joy as they hear the angel's message: **"I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people" (Luke 2:10),,,**

The message highlights the inclusivity of the Gospel. Jesus comes not for the elite or the privileged but for all people, beginning with the overlooked and the outcast. The shepherds, who may have been caring for sheep destined for temple sacrifices, are the first to witness the Lamb of God who will take away the sins of the world.,,,

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The angelic announcement reminds us that God's glory often shines brightest in unexpected places. The shepherds, though ordinary, are entrusted with an extraordinary message. They respond in faith and haste, becoming the first evangelists of the Good News. ,,,

The shepherds didn't stay in the fields after hearing the good news. They went to see the Christ child and then shared what they had witnessed. Their lives became testimonies of God's work.,,,

Like the shepherds, we are called to respond to Christ's birth with both worship and witness. This Christmas, take time to reflect on the joy of Christ's coming—and then share that joy with others. ,,,

A few years ago, a "pay-it-forward" chain at a coffee shop lasted for hours. One person's generosity inspired hundreds to do the same, creating a ripple of kindness. Like the shepherds, one encounter with good news can transform lives.,,,

How can we, like the shepherds, take action? Share your testimony. Invite a friend to church. Volunteer in your community. Every action, no matter how small, can ripple into eternity.,,,

"The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen" (Luke 2:20).,,,

The shepherds' response to encountering Jesus is worship and witness. They glorify God for what they have experienced and share the news with others. Their testimony causes wonder and amazement among all who hear it. In contrast, Mary treasures these moments in her heart, pondering their significance.,,,

The shepherds' response is a model for all who encounter Christ. They glorify and praise God, not just for what they witnessed but for the fulfillment of His promises. They also share the good news, and those who hear their testimony are filled with wonder.,,,

Mary's response is equally profound. She treasures these moments and ponders them in her heart ,, (verse 19).,, Her quiet reflection contrasts with the shepherds' outward proclamation, showing us that worship can take many forms.,,,

This dual response—outward praise and inward reflection—captures the essence of Christmas. It is a time to proclaim the good news boldly while also meditating on its profound meaning in our lives.,,,

Like the shepherds, we are called to respond to the Gospel with both worship and action. Their obedience and joy set an example for us to follow as we share the message of Christ's birth with a world in need of hope. ,,

Isaac Watts,, (1674 to 1748) was born to Dissenting parents,, (people who refused to accept the authority and practices of the Church of England). As a boy, he sang hymns outside prison walls to encourage his father, who had been arrested for his non-conformist beliefs. ,,

Isaac showed promise as a poet at a very young age. As he grew, he became increasingly unhappy with the hymns that he sang in church each week. In those days, hymns were psalms set to music. Watts saw that the hymns thus reflected little or nothing of the New Testament, and set out to remedy that error. His hymns—at least his earlier hymns—reinterpreted the psalms in the light of the Christian faith. In 1719, he published a book of hymns entitled, *The Psalms of David Imitated in the Language of the New Testament*. ,,

One of those hymns was "Joy to the World," based loosely on Psalm 98, which says, "Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises" (Psalm 98:4). That psalm looks forward to the day when the Lord will come to judge the world in righteousness. In this hymn, Watts reinterpreted the psalm to rejoice in the coming of the Christ as our Lord and savior.,,,

This hymn was sung to various tunes for many years. Then in 1839, Lowell Mason, a banker who happened to be quite interested in church music, published the tune that we now associate with "Joy to

the World." Mason borrowed liberally from classical music, and acknowledged his debt to Handel's "Messiah" for parts of this hymn tune.,,,

Watts wrote some 600 hymns altogether, and is considered to be the father of Christian hymnody. His hymns include such favorites as "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" and "O God, Our Help in Ages Past." But the favorite of favorites is "Joy to the World.",,,

The Christmas story is more than an ancient tale; it's a message of hope for every generation. It reminds us that:,,,

- **God is sovereign:** He works through the events of history and the details of our lives.,,,
- **God values humility:** He chose to enter our world in the humblest way imaginable.,,,
- **God calls us to respond:** Worship Him for who He is and share His love with a world in need.,,,

As we close, picture a world wrapped in darkness. The birth of Jesus is like the dawn of a new day, piercing that darkness with hope, peace, and joy. This light is for all people, just as the angel proclaimed: "**Good news of great joy for all the people**" (Luke 2:10),,,

The birth of Jesus Christ is not just a story—it's a call to live differently. From His humble beginning to the joy He brings and the action He inspires, Christ's birth transforms us. This Christmas, let us reflect on the greatest gift ever given and respond with hearts full of humility, joy, and action.,,,

The birth of Jesus is a story of contrasts:,,,

- A mighty emperor and a humble Savior.,,,
- A crowded city and a quiet stable.,,,
- An earthly decree and a divine plan.,,,

It is a story that reveals the heart of God:,,,

- **Sovereignty:** He orchestrates history to fulfill His promises.,,,
- **Humility:** He chooses the lowly and overlooked to reveal His glory.,,,
- **Joy:** He brings peace and salvation to all who receive Him.,,,

This Christmas, may we respond as the shepherds did—with worship and witness—and as Mary did—with quiet reflection. Let us celebrate the good news of great joy: that Christ, our Savior, has been born.,,,,,,

Heavenly Father, thank You for sending Your Son into our broken world. Thank You for the gift of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Thank You for choosing humility over grandeur, for valuing the least and the lost, and for inviting us into Your story. Thank You for working through history to bring about Your plan of salvation. Thank You for orchestrating history to bring salvation to the world. Help us to embrace the humility of Christ's birth, to worship You with joy, and to share Your love with all we meet. Help us to embrace the humility of Christ's birth, to glorify You in all we do, and to share the joy of the Gospel with others. May we, like the shepherds, respond to Your good news with hearts full of worship and lives committed to sharing Your light. May the light of Christ shine in our hearts and

through our lives this Christmas season. May we be bearers of Your light in a world longing for hope.
In Jesus' name, Amen.,,,

Merry Christmas! Go in peace, and carry the light of Christ with you into the world, and may the peace and joy of Christ's birth fill your hearts and homes!,,,

-- That's our Lord's message for this Lord's Day and I hope you got a blessing out of it!,,

-- Go out this week and be a blessing and be blessed! ,, -- For the more you are a blessing, the more you will be blessed!,,

-- Thank you all for watching and listening and we will see you all next week!

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